SUPPLEMENT TO

Phillips Phonograph.

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED.

MY FELLOW LABORER.*

A Novel.

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AUTHOR OF "SHE," "JESS," "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "ALLAN QUARTERMAIN," "DAWN," "BEATRICE," "MAIWA'S REVENGE," "THE WORLD'S DESIRE," ETC., ETC.

I.

SINCE my name has become so widely known in the world, and my discovery the subject of conversation wherever civilized men do congregate, I have, through the agency of one of the establishments that have recently sprung up, and which for a moderate fee distribute to individuals such cuttings from newspapers as may concern them, been made acquainted with a considerable amount of gossip more or less truthfully connected with my private affairs. This nuisance began to come upon me shortly after the publication some years since of my work, "The Secret of Life." The reader will remember, if this short history of facts is ever made public in years to come, that the appearance of this book created a great sensation, even in what is called English society.

Everybody appeared to have read "The Secret of Life," or pretended to have read it, and it was no uncommon thing to meet ladies who evidently knew far more about the whole matter than I did after many years' study. But it—society I mean—seems soon to have tired of the scientific aspect of the question, not even the interest attaching to the origin and cause of existence could keep its attention fixed on that for long.

Unfortunately, however, curiosity passed from my book to myself. It seemed to strike people as wonderful that they should never have heard anything of the Dr. Gosden (for this was before Her Majesty was graciously pleased, somewhat against my own inclinations, to make me a baronet), who happened to be able to discover the Secret of Life, and accordingly they, or rather some of the society papers, set themselves to supply the want. Thus it was that a good deal of rather ill-natured talk got about as to what had been the exact relationship between myself and my fellow-laborer, Miss Denelly. I say ill-natured advisedly, for there was nothing more than that; but still, at the best, it was, and indeed is calculated to give pain to myself and to the lady concerned, whose conduct throughout has been morally blameless, and such as I can conscientiously say on the whole commends itself to my reason, however much it may jar upon my prejudices.

And now with this short apology to myself for setting down on paper a passage in my private history, I will tell the story, such as it is. I say "to myself," for probably it will never be made public, and if it is, it will be in accordance with the judgment of my executors after my death, so I shall have nothing to do with it.

I am now a middle-aged man, and have been a doctor for many years. While I was still walking the hospitals, my mother died and left me all her property, which amounted to four hundred a year, and on this slight encouragement, having quiet and domestic tastes, I went the way that young men generally do go when circumstances permit of it, and instantly got married. My wife, who possessed some small means, was a lady of my own age; and, owing to circumstances which I need not enter into here, had a cousin dependent upon her, a girl of about thirteen. That girl was Fanny Denelly, and my wife made it a condition of our marriage, to which I readily consented, that she should live with us.

I shall never forget the impression that the young lady made upon me when she came to join us in our little house at Fulham, after we went there to settle at the end of our honeymoon. As it happened, I had only seen her once or twice before, and then in the most casual way, or in the dusk, so this was the first opportunity I had of studying her. She was only a young girl between fourteen and fifteen, I think, but still there was something striking about her. Her hair, which was black and lustrous, was braided back from a most ample forehead. The eyes were large and dark, not sleepy like most dark eyes, but intelligent and almost stern in their expression. The rest of the face was well cut but massive, and rather masculine in appearance, and even at that age the girl gave promise of great beauty of form to which she afterward attained. For the rest she was exceedingly quiet, and exceedingly useful, and though we did not speak much together, it soon became evident that she liked me.

A year after my marriage my wife unhappily became the victim of a bad accident in a cab, as a result of which our child John was a cripple from his birth. To this unfortunate babe, Miss Denelly, or Fanny, as we called her, took a violent affection, which, as the child's intelligence expanded, was amply returned. Indeed, he cared more for her than for his mother and myself put together, and I think that the cause of their mutual attachment was to be found in Fanny's remarkable strength of body and character. The poor, weak, deformed boy rested on solid depths of nature, a[illegible]e by faith are able to rest on Providence, [illegible] a sense of absolute security. However m[illegible] pain he was in, he

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would become quiet when she came and took him in her strong arms and nursed him. Oddly enough, too, it was almost the same thing with my wife.

She had never got over the effects of her accident, and the shock of the birth of our crippled boy. Indeed, as the years went on, she seemed to grow weaker and weaker, and to rely more and more absolutely on Fanny.

The germ, small as a mustard-seed, which has now, after so many years of experimental labor and patient thought, grown up into the great tree of my discovery, lay in my mind in the form of a dormant speculation from the very commencement of my medical career. After my marriage it began to grow and take root there, but for some years I went on with my every-day practice, which was that of a consulting doctor in the city, and said nothing about it. The fact was that the whole seemed too wild, and I was afraid of being set down as one of those enthusiasts who spend all their lives in chasing a shadow.

At last, however, my secret grew too heavy for me to bear, and one night, after dinner, acting on some sudden impulse, I began to unfold it to my wife and Fanny. At first my wife was much interested, and said that it all sounded like one of Poe's tales, but presently, when I got more to the intricate parts of my theory, for it was nothing but a theory then, she fell into a brown study, and after a while broke into the conversation. I thought she was following my line of argument, and about to question it, and was rather disgusted when she said:

"Excuse me, Geoffrey, but did you remember to send that check for the coals?"

I supposed I looked put out, at any rate I stopped abruptly.

"Don't be vexed with me for interrupting, dear," she went on, "but I want to know about the coals, and I haven't been able to get a word in edgeways for the last twenty minutes."

"Quite so," I replied, with dignity. "Pray don't apologize; no doubt the coals are more important than my discovery."

"Nonsense, dear," she answered, with a smile; "of course, if there was anything in what you say, it would be very important. But if your story is true, you are as bad as that man Darwin, who believes that we are all descended from monkeys, and what we are told in the Bible about Eve being made out of Adam's rib falls to the ground. So you see it must be nonsense, and the coals are the most important after all."

Now my dear wife was one of the sweetest as she certainly was one of the best, women in the world, but on one point she was always prepared to lose her temper, and that point was Adam's ribs. So, being aware of this, I held my tongue, and after talking a little more about the coals, she said that she did not feel well, and was going to bed.

CHAPTER II.

All the time that I had been holding forth, until my eloquence was quenched by the coal question, Fanny was sitting opposite to me, watching my face with all her eyes. Evidently *she* was interested in what I had to say, though she sat so silent. She was now seventeen or eighteen years of age, and a very fine young woman indeed, but a remarkably silent one.

When my wife had bidden us good-night and gone, I filled my pipe and lighted it, for I was ruffled, and smoking has a soothing effect upon my nerves.

"Geoffrey," said Fanny, when I had finished, for she always called, "is this idea of yours a new one? I mean, has it ever entered anybody's brain before?"

"So far as I am aware," I answered, "it is the one exception that was wanted to prove Solomon's rule—it is absolutely and completely new." (This has subsequently turned out to be the fact.)

"If I understand you rightly, your idea, if it can be established, will furnish a rational explanation of the phenomenon of life."

"Quite so," I answered, for her interpretation was in every way accurate, almost pedantically so.

"And," she went on, "the certainty of the practical immortality of the soul, or rather of the 'ego' or individual identity, will follow as a necessary consequence, will it not?"

"Yes. Individual immortality of *everything* that has life is the key-stone of the arch. If that is wanting there is nothing in my discovery."

"And this immortality will be quite independent of any known system of religion?"

"Certainly, as most people understand religion, namely as typified by the tenets of a particular sect, but not by any means independent of natural religion, and on the other hand altogether dependent on the existence of a supreme, and in the end, all-triumphant power of good, which, if my theory can be upheld, will then be proved beyond the possibility of a doubt."

Fanny thought for a moment or two, and then spoke again.

"Do you know, Geoffrey, if you carry this through, you will go down to posterity as one of the greatest men in the whole world, perhaps as the very greatest!"

I knew from the tone of her voice that she meant what she said, and also that if all this *could* be proved, her prophecy would probably be fulfilled.

"Yes," I said, "but I suppose that to work the whole thing out, and prove it, would take a lifetime. To begin with, the premises would have to be established and an enormous amount of special knowledge acquired, from the groundwork of which, and from the records of thousands of noted cases of mental phenomena, that it would take years to collect, one would have to work slowly up toward the light. A man would be obliged to give his entire time to the subject, and in my case even that would not suffice, for I am no mathematician, and, unless I am mistaken, the issue will depend almost entirely upon the mathematical power of the investigator. He could not even employ anybody to do part of the work for him, for the calculator must himself be imbued with the spirit that directs the calculations, and be prepared to bend them this way or that, to omit this factor and to pick up the other as circumstances require. Now, as you know, I am little short of a fool at mathematics, and therefore on this point alone I am out of the race, and I fear that the Secret of Life will never be discovered by me, though perhaps I shall be able to put some one else on the track of it."

"Yes," said the girl, quietly, "that is true enough, but you forget one thing. If you are not a mathematician, *I* am, and I can enter into your ideas, Geoffrey, for I believe that we have grown very much alike during the last four or five years—I mean in mind."

I started, for both her statements were perfectly accurate. The girl had remarkable mathematical faculty, almost approaching to genius. I had procured for her the best instruction that I could, but she had now arrived at that point when instructors were of no further use to her. In those days, of course, there were not the facilities for female education that there are now, and though it is not so very long ago, learning in women was not thought so very highly of. Men rather said, with Martial: "*Sit non doctissima conjunx*," and so her gift had hitherto not proved of any great service to her. Also she was right in saying that we had grown alike in mind and ways of thought. She had come into the house quite young, but young as she was, she had always been a great companion to me. Not that she was much of a talker, but she understood how to listen and to show that she was giving her attention to what was being said, a thing that in my opinion a very few women can do. And I suppose that in this way, she, in the course of time, became thoroughly imbued with my ideas, and, in short, that her mind, as I thought, took its color from my own. At any rate, it did so superficially, and I know that she would understand the drift of my thoughts long before anybody else did, and would even sometimes find words to clothe them before I could myself.

"Why should we not work on the Secret of Life together, Geoffrey?" she said, fixing her dark eyes on my face.

"My dear," I answered, "you know not what you do! Are you prepared to give up your youth, and perhaps all your life, to a search and a study which may and probably will after all prove chimerical? Remember that such a thing is not to be lightly taken up, or, if once taken up, lightly abandoned. If I make up my mind to understand it, I shall practically be obliged to give up my practice as a doctor to it: and the same, remember, applies to you, for I should prove a hard task-master. You would have to abandon all the every-day aims and pleasures of your sex and youth, to scorn delights and live laborious days, on the chance of benefiting humanity and for the certainty of encountering opposition and ridicule."

"Yes," she said, "but I am willing to do that. I want to become somebody and to do something with my life, not just to go out like one little candle in a lighted ball-room and never be missed."

"Very well, Fanny, so be it. I only hope you have not undertaken a task beyond your strength. If you have not, you are a very remarkable woman, that is all."

At that moment our conversation was disturbed by the sound of a person falling heavily on the floor of the room above us, which was occupied by my wife.

Without another word we both turned and ran up-stairs. I knocked at the door, but, getting no answer, entered, accompanied by Fanny, to find my dear wife lying in her dressing-gown in a dead faint before the toilet-table. We lifted her up to the bed, and with great difficulty brought her round, but this fainting fit was the commencement of her last illness. Her constitution appeared to have entirely broken up, and all we could do was to prolong her life by a few months.

It was a most heart-breaking business, and one on which even at this distance of time I do not care to dwell. I was deeply attached to my wife; indeed, she was my first and only love in the sense in which the word is generally used; but my love and care availed but little against the forward march of the Destroyer. For three months we fought against him, but he came on as surely and relentlessly as the tide, and at last the end was upon us. Before her death her mind cleared, as the sun often does in sinking, and she spoke to me so sweetly, and yet so hopefully, that her tender words almost broke my heart. And yet it was a happy death. I have seen many people die, but I never remember one

who was so completely borne up across the dark gulf upon the wings of child-like faith. All her fears and grief were for me, for herself she had none. When at last she had kissed her boy and bade him farewell—thank Heaven he was not old enough to understand what it meant—and said her last word to me, she sent for Fanny and kissed her too.

"Good-bye, my love," she said; "you must look after Geoffrey and the boy when I am gone," and then, as though a sudden idea struck her, she took the girl's hand and placed it in mine. "You will just suit each other," she said, with a faint smile, and those were the last words she spoke.

Fanny colored and said nothing. I remember thinking afterward that most women would have cried.

And then the end came and left me broken-hearted.

It was the night after the funeral, and I was walking up and down my little study, struggling against a distress that only seemed to further overwhelm me the more I tried to bear up against it, and thinking with that helpless bitterness that does come upon us at such times, wrapping us, as it were, in a mist of regret, of the many little things I might have done to make my dear wife happier while she lived, and of the irreparable void her loss had left in my life. It was well for her, I was sure of that, for what can be better than to sleep? But in those days that certainty of a future individual existence, which I have now been able through my discoveries to reach to, was not present with me. It only loomed as a possibility at the end of an untraveled vista. She was gone, and no echo came from where she was. How could I know that I had not lost her forever? Or, even if she lived in some dim heaven, that I too should make my way thither, and find her unchanged; for remember that change is death! It has all passed now. I am as sure as I write these words that at no distant date I shall stand face to face with her again, as I am that the earth travels round the sun. The science that has unalterably demonstrated the earth's course has also vindicated that inborn instinct of humanity so much attacked of late days, and demonstrated its truth to me beyond the possibility of doubt. But I did not know it then.

"I shall never see her again, never!" I cried in my agony, "and I have nothing left to live for!"

"Perhaps you will not," said a quiet voice at my elbow, "but you have your child and your work left to live for. And if there is anything in your discovery, you will see her through all the ages."

It was Fanny, who had come into the room without my noticing it, and somehow her presence and her words brought comfort to me.

III.

About three months after my dear wife's death, Fanny Denelly and I commenced our investigations in good earnest. But, as I had prophesied, I soon discovered that I could not serve two masters. It was practically impossible for me to carry on the every-day work of my profession, and at the same time give up my mind to the almost appalling undertaking I had in hand. Any spare time that was left to me, after providing for my day's work, was more than occupied in collecting notes of those particular kinds of physical and mental, or, to coin a word, spirituo-mental phenomena—some of which are, as readers of "The Secret of Life" may see, exceedingly rare—that I required as a groundwork of my argument, and with the carrying on of a voluminous correspondence with such scientific men all over the world as did not set me down as a dreamer, or worse. So I had to make up my mind either to do one thing or the other, give up my search after the moral philosopher's stone, or surrender the lease of my chambers in the city. For some months I worked double tides, and hesitated, but at last my decision could no longer be postponed, it must be one thing or the other. So in my perplexity I consulted Fanny, and having laid the whole matter before her, asked her which course she thought I ought to take. Her answer was prompt and unhesitating. It was to the effect that I should give up my profession and devote myself exclusively to my investigations.

"You have six hundred a year to live on," she said, "and therefore will not starve; and, if you succeed, you will achieve immortal fame; for you will have found the way to minister to a mind diseased, and, if you fail, you will have acquired an enormous mass of knowledge which you may be able to turn to account in some other way. I have no doubt myself on the matter. Think of what the reward before you is."

I did not quite like Fanny's way of putting the matter. She always seemed to me to dwell too much upon the personal advantages that would result from my success. Now such a quest as mine is not for the individual; it is for the whole wide world, and for the millions and millions who are yet to live upon it. What does it matter who finds, provided that the truth is found? Why, any right-thinking man should be glad, if his circumstances will permit of it, to give his life to such a cause; ay, even if he knows that, so far as he is concerned, he will never reach the goal, but be trodden down and forgotten. He should be glad and happy, I say, if he can only think that some more fortunate seeker will be able to step a pace forward on his prostrate form. But, after all, even the best and widest-minded women, as I have found them, will look at things in a strictly personal light. I do not think that as a class they care much for humanity at large, or would go far out of their way to help it; of course, I mean if they are certain that nobody will hear of their good work. But this is only an opinion.

I pointed this out to Fanny, who shrugged her handsome shoulders, and said that really she did not think it mattered much which way one looked at it; the great thing was to succeed.

Well, I took her advice, partly because it fell in with my own views, and partly because I have always paid more attention to Fanny than to any other living creature. Indeed, to this day I hold her judgment in almost childish veneration. It was a hard wrench to me, giving up the outward and visible following of my profession, more especially as I was then in a fair way to achieve considerable success in it; but it had to be done. I felt it my duty to do it, and so I made the best of it. What was still harder, however, was the reception that my decision met with among such few relatives as I possessed, and my friends and acquaintances. They remonstrated with me personally and by letter, and annoyed me in every way, and upon every possible occasion. Even relatives with whom I had never had the slightest intercourse thought this a good opportunity to inaugurate an epistolary acquaintance. One old aunt wrote to ask what amount of truth there was in the rumor that I had given up my profession, and what I had taken to in place of it? I replied that I was devoting myself to scientific research. An answer came by return of post, to the effect that, having heard that I was doing so well as a doctor, she had recognized my talents in her will. This she had, on receipt of my letter of explanation, at once given instructions to alter by the omission of my name; she was not going to have her money squandered on scientific researches, which always ended in smoke. "Science, indeed," her letter ended. "Why you might as well have taken to looking for the North Pole *or even literature!*"

Finding my resolution unalterable—for one of my few good points is that I do not turn back—I was, however, soon given up by the whole family as an irreclaimable ne'r-do-well, and it was, I believe, even hinted among them that I was not altogether responsible for my actions. At any rate, the rumor did get round, and whether it was owing to this or to the fact that I could no longer be looked upon as an individual who was likely to make money, I soon noticed a decided change in the manner of my acquaintance, professional and lay, toward me. Before, their attitude had at least been respectful; now it was, if not contemptuous, at least tinged with superior pity.

Well, I put up with it all humbly enough, but now that my position is such that these very people who have treated me with contumely for so many years, go about and boast of their intimacy with me, and are even so kind as to supply the papers with the supposed details of my private life, I will confess that the pill was a bitter one for me to swallow. Not that I was altogether without comfort, faintly foreseeing the hour of triumph that has come.

Besides, even when we must perforce do worship to Mammon and bow the knee to Baal, there are yet consolations. It is something to feel with the keen instinct which knows no error that the minds of those contemptuous scoffers, who think so well of themselves and so ill of you, are to your mind as the ditch-mud is to the mirror reflecting heaven's own light; that in you there dwells a spark of the glorious creative fire of which they know nothing, and cannot even understand; and that they, the rich, the respected, the prosperous and unctuously happy, are as far beneath you, whom they despise as an unsuccessful dreamer, in all that really tends to make a man divine, as their dogs and horses are beneath them.

That was how I thought in those days, and I think so still, though now that it is showered in upon me, I do not care much for that world-wide praise I used to covet in my bitterer and more lonely moments, when imminent failure seemed to press me round like the darkness closing in. It is too rank and too undiscerning, and much of it is merely tribute to success and not to the brain and work that won it.

In short, as will be understood with difficulty, being human, I felt all this neglect of which I have striven to show the color, pretty sharply, and though I submitted, and was perfectly able to analyze its causes, it gave my mind a misanthropic turn, from which it has never quite recovered, for the world's adulation can never atone for the world's contempt, or even for the neglect of those around us who make our world. And thus as time went on I gradually acquired a greater and greater dislike to mixing in society, and began to attach myself more and more to my studies and to Fanny, who became by degrees the only person that I thoroughly trusted and relied on in the world.

When my dear wife had been dead eighteen months, it occurred to me that there were inconveniencies attaching to our mode of life, and that if she saw matters in the same light, it would be well to draw the bond of friendship and affection yet closer by marriage. Not that I was in

love with Fanny Denelly in the sense in which the term is generally used. Indeed, it was one of her great charms in my eyes that it seemed possible to live on the terms of the closest friendship and affection with her without any nonsense of the sort being imported into the intimacy, either on one side or the other. Also, as far as I was concerned, I had buried all passion of that kind with my dear wife, and my speculations occupied my mind far too entirely to allow of the entry into it of any of those degrading imitations to which imaginative and intelligent men are, oddly enough, especially liable if they are not very hard worked, probably on account of the greater irritability and sensitiveness of their brains.

What I looked forward to in marrying Fanny Denelly was a reasonable and sensible companionship entered into for the comfort of congenial society and to further the end to which we had both devoted our lives. Also I was desirous of giving my unfortunate boy a permanent substitute for his dead mother, and one whom he dearly loved. Accordingly, I took an occasion one evening after dinner to speak to Fanny about the question, before we settled down to our night's work. This I did with some trepidation, for however well you may think you understand a woman, it is not always possible to know how she will take a matter of the sort. Still I put the best face on it that I could, and talked for a quarter of an hour without stopping.

All the time she sat still with her hands behind her head, and her dark eyes fixed upon my face, and never said a word.

"You are a very curious man, Geoffrey," she answered, with a little laugh when at last I had done.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because you have put the whole question before me as though marriage were a chapter out of 'The Secret of Life.'"

"Well, for the matter of that, so it generally is," I said.

"And you have not said one word of affection. It has all been business, from beginning to end.'"

"My dear Fanny," I answered, "you know how deeply I am attached to you. I did not think it necessary to enlarge upon the point."

"Yes," she answered, gently, and with a new light shining in her eyes, "but it is a point that women like to hear enlarged upon. I am only a woman, after all, Geoffrey. I am not *all* scientific and mathematical."

I saw that I had made a mistake, and had appealed too much to the reasoning side of her nature as opposed to the sentimental. To tell the truth, when one lives day by day with a woman, and all one's talk is of the highest problems of existence, one is apt to forget that these matters are, after all, only more or less accidental to her, and that the basis of flesh and blood, on which they are built up, remains the same. In short, one gets to view her more in the light of a man.

A man can lose his old Adam in studies or aspirations, or in devotion to a cause; but a woman, so far as my experience goes, and as the moral of this story tends to prove, can never quite get rid of the original Eve.

"My dearest Fanny," I said, "forgive me," and then I took another line of argument with her which I need not enter into—for that tale has been told so often before, and besides one always looks back at those sort of things with a kind of mental blush. Sufficient to say that it proved effective.

"I will marry you, dearest Geoffrey," she murmured at last, "and I hope that in looking together for the Secret of Life, we shall find the secret of Happiness also."

"Very well, love," I said; "and now that we have settled that, let us get to our work. We have lost an hour already!"

IV.

When once we had made up our minds to get married, we both of us came to the conclusion that the sooner we did so the better; more especially as the introduction of a new factor into our relationship was to my unaccustomed mind in a certain sense improper and irksome, although by no means unpleasant. Also it wasted time and tended to direct our attention from the vast undertaking to which we were pledged. Accordingly, within a very few days of the occurrence already described, I visited a registery, and having, as it seemed to me, paid several unnecessary fees, provided myself with a license. On my way back I walked down Fleet Street, thinking amiably of getting married and Dr. Johnson, and intending to take the omnibus at Charing Cross. As I went I happened to look up, and my eye fell upon a notice to the effect that a certain well-known life assurance company had its offices within the building opposite. Then it was that the idea first occurred to me that I ought to insure my life, so that, should anything happen to me, Fanny might have something to keep her from poverty. As it was, she would have absolutely nothing. All that I had, and that my wife had brought with her, was strictly settled upon the boy John in such a way that I could not even give my subsequent wife a life interest in it, or a part of it. I stopped there in the street, and having given the matter a few moments' consideration, came to the conclusion that it was my duty to provide for Fanny to some small extent—say two thousand pounds.

Upon this decision, I crossed the road-way, and, entering the office, made some inquiries from a clerk. As it happened, the doctor attached to the company was at that moment in attendance and disengaged, so thinking that I could not do better than get a disagreeable business over at once, I sent up my card and asked to see him. The messenger returned presently, with a request that I would "step up," which I accordingly did, to find myself, to my astonismant, in the presence of an old fellow-student of my own, with whom I had in former days been tolerably intimate, but whom I had not seen for years. We greeted each other cordially enough, and after a few minutes' talk I told him the business I had in hand, and he began his medical examination with the series of stock questions which doctors always put upon these occasions.

The only point upon which he dwelt at all was insanity, and he was so persistent upon this matter that I perceived he had heard some of the rumors about me being mentally deranged, which my friends and relations had so materially assisted to spread. However, I got through that part of the business, and then I undid my shirt, and he proceeded with the physical examination First he applied the stethoscope to my heart, and quickly removed it, evidently satisfied. Then he placed it over my right lung and listened. While he did so, I saw his face change, and a thrill of fear shot through me as it suddenly came into my mind that I had experienced some trouble there of late, of which I had taken no notice, and which had, indeed, quite passed out of my mind. Next he tried the other lung, and placed the stethoscope on the table.

"What is the matter?" I asked, keeping as calm a face as I could, for I could tell from his look that there was something very wrong.

"Come, Gosden, you are a medical man yourself, and a clever one, and there is no need for me to tell you about it."

"Upon my word," I answered, "I know nothing of what you mean. I have not bothered about my own health for years; but, now I think of it, I have had some local trouble on the chest, last winter especially. What is it? It is better to know the worst."

"Our rule here," he answered, dryly, "is not to make any communication to the person examined; but, as we are brother practitioners, I suppose I may dispense with it, and tell you at once that I cannot recommend your life to the board to be insured upon any terms. That is what is the matter with you, old fellow," and he went on, in terms too technical for me to write down here, to describe the symptoms of one of the most deadliest, and yet most uncertain, forms of lung disease, in short to pass sentence of death upon me.

I do not think that I am a coward, and I hope I took it well. The bitter irony of the whole thing lay in the fact that while I was in active practice, I had made this form of disease a special study, and used to flatter myself that I could stop it, or at any rate stave it off indefinitely, if only I could get at it in time. I might have stopped my own, if I had known about it. Ah! who shall heal the physician?

"Well, there you are Gosden," went on my friend; "you know as much about it as I do; you may live three years, and you may live thirty, but the odds are against you lasting five. You know what an uncertain thing it is. There is only one thing certain about it, and that is, that it will kill you sooner or later. I speak plainly, because we are both accustomed to face these sort of facts. Perhaps you had better take another opinion."

I shook my head. Now that my attention had been called to it, no opinions could help me. He was perfectly right, I might go very shortly, or I might live till well on into middle life. As the event has proved, I have lived, but I am not far from the end of my tether now.

"Are you of opinion," I asked, "that my form of disease is likely to prove hereditary?"

I knew what his answer would be, but I put the question as a forlorn hope.

"Of course. I should consider that it would certainly be hereditary; and, what is more, it is extremely probable that your wife would contract it also. But why do you ask? You are not going to get married again, are you?"

"I am engaged to be married."

"Well," he replied, "of course it is an awkward thing to talk to a man about, but if you take my advice, you will be a little more honorable than most people are under the circumstances, and break the match off."

"I am quite of your opinion," I said, "and now I will bid you good-day."

"Well, good-bye, Gosden. I don't think it will be of any use my making a report to the board unless you wish it. Don't worry yourself, old fellow, and keep your chest warm, and you may see fifty yet!"

In another minute I was in Fleet Street again, and felt vaguely astonished that it should look just the same as it did a quarter of an hour before. Most of us have experienced this sensation when some radical change of circumstance has suddenly fallen upon us. It seems curious that the great hurrying world should be so dead to our individuality and heedless of our most vital hopes. A quarter of an hour before, I was a man with a prospect of a long and useful, per-

haps a most eminent career. Also I was just going to be married to a congenial wife. Now I was, as I then thought, doomed to an early grave, and as for the wife, the idea had to be abandoned. I was in honor bound to abandon it for her sake, and for the sake of possible children.

Well, I walked on to Charing Cross, and took the omnibus as I had intended. I remember that there was a fat woman in it, who insisted upon carrying a still fatter pug dog, and quarreled with the conductor seriously in consequence. All this took place in the month of December, and by the time I got home it was beginning to grow dark. I went straight into the study: Fanny was there, and the lamp was lighted. When I entered she flung down her pen, and jumping up, came forward and kissed me; and, as she did so, I thought what a splendid looking woman she had grown into, with her intellectual face and shapely form, and somehow the reflection sent a sharp pang through me. Now that I knew that I must lose her, it seemed to me that I loved her almost as I had loved my dead wife, and indeed I have often noticed that we never know how much we value a thing till we are called upon to resign it. Certainly I noticed it now.

"Well, dear," she said, "have you got it? Why, what *is* the matter with you?"

"Sit down, Fanny," I answered, "and I will tell you, only you must try to bear it as well as you can."

She seated herself in her calm, determined way, although I could see that she was anxious, and I began at the beginning, and went straight through my story without skipping a word. As soon as she understood its drift her face set like a stone, and she heard me to the end without interruption or movement.

"Well, Geoffrey," she said, in a low voice, when at last I had done, "and what is to be the end of it all?"

"This: that our marriage cannot come off—and death!"

"Why cannot our marriage come off?"

"I have told you why, dear. A man afflicted as I am has no right to send his affliction down to future generations. People are fond of calling the inevitable result of such conduct the decree of Providence, but it is the cause of most of the misery in the world, and as medical men know well enough, a wicked and selfish thing to do."

"The world does not seem to think so. One sees such marriages every day."

"Yes, because the world is blind, and mad, and bad."

"I don't agree with you, Geoffrey," she answered, with passion. "Our lives are our own, posterity must look after itself. We have a right to make the best of our lives, such as they are, without consulting the interests of those who may never exist. If they do exist, then they must take their chance, and bear their burdens as we bear ours. All this talk about the future and posterity is nonsense. What will posterity care for us that we should care for it? We cannot affect it one way or the other; it is hopeless to expect to turn Nature out of her path. We are nothing but feathers blown about by the wind, and all we can do is to go where the wind blows us, and when we fall, to fall as softly as we may."

I looked up astonished. I had no idea that Fanny held views as merciless, and, opposed to all pure altruism as they were, in a sense, unanswerable. Indeed, I had heard her express notions directly contrary, and at the moment was totally at a loss to account for the change. Of course, however, the explanation was easy enough. Theory had come into conflict with interest, and, as is often the case even in the most highly developed people, it was so much the worse for the theory.

"I am sorry to hear you speak so, dear," I said. "I hoped and thought that you would have supported me in a very painful resolution. The blow is hard enough to bear, even with your help; without, it is almost unendurable."

She rose from her chair, and then for the first time I realized the depth of her emotion. Her beautiful eyes flashed, her bosom heaved, and she slowly crushed the paper she held in her hand to shield her face from the fire, into a shapeless mass, and then threw it down.

"You have no heart," she said. "Do you suppose it is nothing to me, who was going to marry you within a week, to lose my husband and to be obliged to fall back again into this half life, this very twilight of a life? Oh! Geoffrey, think again," and she stretched out her arms toward me, and looked at me, and spoke in accents of impassioned tenderness. "Think," she went on, "can you not give up your scruples for me? Am I not worth straining a point in your conscience? There is nothing in the world, Geoffrey, that a man can profit by in exchange for his love. Soon this disease will take a hold of you, and then you will grow weak, and miserable, and incapable of enjoyment. Live now while you can, and leave the consequences to Providence, or rather to the workings of those unchanging rules which we call Providence. Look at me: I am beautiful, and I love you, and my intellect is almost as great as your own. Don't throw me away for a theory, Geoffrey."

All the time that she was speaking she drew slowly nearer to me, her arms outstretched and her great eyes glowing and changing in the shaded light. And now the arms closed round me, and she lay upon my heart and gazed into my face, till I thought that I should be overcome. But, thank Heaven! somehow for conscience' sake I found the resolution to hold to what I knew to be the right. I think it was the recollection of my dear wife that came over me at that moment, and induced a sudden feeling of revulsion to the beautiful woman who lay in my arms, and who did not scruple to resort to such means to turn me from my duty. Had it not been for the thought, I am sure that being but a man, and therefore weak, I should have yielded and then there would have been no possibility of further retreat. As it were, I, with a desperate effort, wrenched myself free from her.

"It is of no use, Fanny," I cried, in despair. "I will not do it! I think that it would be wicked for a man in my condition to get married. This distresses me beyond measure; but if I yielded to you I should be doing a shameful thing. Forgive me, Fanny, it is not my fault, I did not know. It is hard enough," I added, with a natural burst of indignation, "to be suddenly doomed to a terrible death without having to go through this agony," and with a sudden motion I flung the wedding license into the fire.

She watched it burn, and then sunk back in the chair, covered her face in her hands and said no more. In this position she remained for nearly half an hour. Then she rose, and with a stern cold face that it almost frightened me to look upon, returned to her work, which was now once more the chief bond between us; nor was the subject of our engagement alluded to again for many months. Nobody had known of it, and nobody knew that it had come to an end. And so it died and went the way of dead things into what seems to be forgetfulness, but is in truth the gate-way into those new and endless halls of perpetuated life on whose walls evil and unhappy records of the past, blazoned in letters of fire, are the lamps to light us down from misery to misery.

But putting aside the mental trouble into which this most melancholy affair plunged me, it gave me much cause for reflection. Making all allowance for the natural disappointment and distress of a woman who was, I suppose, warmly attached to me at the time, I could not help seeing that her conduct threw a new and altogether unsuspected light upon Fanny's character. It showed me that, so far from understanding her completely, as I had vainly supposed to be the case, I really knew little or nothing about her. There were depths in her mind that I had not fathomed, and in all probability never should fathom. I had taken her for an open-hearted woman of great intellectual capacity that removed her far above the every-day level of her sex, and directed her ambitions almost entirely toward the goal of mental triumph. Now I saw that the diagnosis must be modified. In all her outburst there had not been one single word of pity for my heavy misfortunes, or one word of sympathy with the self-sacrifice which she must have known involved a dreadful struggle between my inclinations and my conscience. She had looked at the matter from her own point of view, and the stand-point of her own interest solely. Her emotion had for a few moments drawn the curtain from her inner self, and the new personality that was thus revealed did not altogether edify me. Still, I felt that there was great excuse for her, and so put by the matter with the sigh we give the past and the dead.

After this unfortunate occurrence, I made up my mind that Fanny would take some opportunity to throw up her work and go away and leave us; but she did not take this course. Either because she was too fond of my poor boy John, who, as he grew older, became more and more attached to her, or because she saw no better opening—not being possessed of independent means—she evidently made up her mind to stop on in the house and continue to devote herself to the search for the great Secret of Life. I think myself that it was mainly on account of the boy, who loved her with an entirety that at times almost alarmed me, and to whom she was undoubtedly devoted.

But from that time a change came over Fanny's mental attitude towards me, which was as palpable as it was indefinable. Outwardly there was no change, but in reality a veil fell between us, through which I could not see. It fell and covered up her nature; nor could I guess what went on behind it. Only I knew that she developed a strange habit of brooding silently about matters not connected with our work, and that, of all this brooding, nothing ever seemed to come. Now I know that she was building up far-reaching plans for the future, which had for their object her escape from what she had come to consider was a hateful and unprofitable condition of servitude.

Meanwhile our work advanced but slowly. I could take anybody who is curious to the big fire-proof chest in the corner of this very room, and show him two hundred-weight or more paper covered with abortive calculations worked by Fanny, and equally abortive letter-press written by myself during those years of incessant labor. In vain we toiled; Nature would not give up her secret to us! We had indeed found the lock, and fashioned key after key to turn it. But, do what we would, and file as we would, they would none of them fit, or, even if they fitted, they would *not* turn. And then we would begin

again; again, after months of labor, to fail miserably.

During these dark years I worked with the energy of despair, and Fanny followed, doggedly, patiently, and uncomplainingly in my steps. Her work was splendid in its enduring hopelessness. Te begin with, so far as I was concerned, though my disease made but little visible progress, I feared that my sand was running out, and that none would be able to take up the broken threads. Therefore I worked as those work whose time is short and who have much to do. Then, too, I was haunted by the dread of ultimate failure. Had I, after all, given up my life to a dream?

At last, however, a ray of light came, as it always—yes, always—will to those who are strong and patient, and watch the sky long enough.

I was sitting in my arm-chair, smoking, one night after Fanny had gone to bed, and fell into a sort of doze, to wake up with a start and—an *inspiration*. I saw it all now; we had been working at the wrong end, searching for the roots among the topmost twigs of the great trees! I think that I was really inspired that night; an angel had breathed on me in my sleep. At any rate, I sat here, at this same table at which I am writing now, till the dawn crept in through the shutters, and covered sheet after sheet with the ideas that rose one after another in my brain, in the most perfect order and continuity. When at last my hand refused to hold the pen any longer, I stumbled off to bed, leaving behind me a sketch of the letter-press of all the essential problems finally dealt with in the work known as "The Secret of Life."

Next day we began again upon these new lines, though I did not tell Fanny of the great hopes that rose in my heart. I had assured her that we were on the right track so many times, that I did not like to say anything more about it. But when I explained the course I meant to adopt, she instantly seized upon its salient mathematical points, and showed me what lines she meant to follow in her Sisyphus-like search after the inscrutable factor, which, when found, would, if properly applied, make clear to us whence we came and whither we go—that "open sesame" before whose magic sound the womb of unfathomed time would give up its secrets, and the mystery of the grave be made clear to the wondering eyes of all mankind.

V.

Between two or three months after we had started on this new course, I received a letter from a lady, a distant cousin of my own, whom I had known slightly many years before, asking me to do her a service. Notwithstanding what they considered my insane deviation from the beaten paths that lead or may lead to wealth and social success, my relatives still occasionally wrote to me when they thought I could be of any use to them. In this case the lady, whose name was Mrs. Hide-Thompson, had an only son aged twenty-eight, who was already in possession of very large estates and a considerable fortune in personality. His name was, or rather is, Joseph; and as he was an only child, in the event of whose death all the landed property would pass to some distant Thompson without the Hide, his existence was more valuable in the eyes of a discerning world than that of most Josephs.

Joseph, it appeared from his mother's letter, had fallen into a very bad state of health. He had, it seemed, been a "little wild," and she was therefore very anxious about him. The local doctor, for Joseph lived in the provinces when he was not living in town, in the stronger sense of the word, stated that he would do well to put himself under regular medical care for a month or so. Would I take him in? The expenses would of course be met. She knew that I kept up a warm interest in my relations, and was so very clever, although *unfortunately* I had abandoned active practice. Then followed a couple of sides of note-paper full of the symptoms of the young man's disorders, which did not seem to me to be of a grave nature. I threw this letter across the table to Fanny without making any remark, and she read it attentively through.

"Well," she said, "what are you going to do?"

"Do," I answered, peevishly; "see the people further first! I have got other things to attend to."

"I think that you are wrong," she answered, in an indifferent voice; "this young man is your relation, and very rich. I know that he has at least eight thousand a year, and one should always do a good turn to people with so much money. Also, what he would pay would be very useful to us. I assure you, that I hardly know how to make both ends meet, and there is twenty-seven pounds to pay the Frenchman who collected those returns for you in the Paris hospitals; he has written twice for the money."

I reflected. What she said about the twenty-seven pounds was quite true—I certainly did not know where to look for it. There was a spare room in the house, and probably the young gentleman was inoffensive. If he was not, he could go.

"Very well," I said, "he can come if he likes; but I warn you, you will have to amuse him! I shall attend to his treatment, and there will be an end of it."

She looked up quickly. "It is not much in my line, unless he cares for mathematics," she answered. "I have seen five men under fifty here, during the last five years—exactly one a year. However, I will try."

A week after this conversation, Mr. Joseph Hide-Thompson arrived, carefully swaddled in costly furs. He was a miserable little specimen of humanity—thin, freckled, weak-eyed, and with straight, sandy hair. But I soon found out that he was sharp—sharp as a ferret. On his arrival, just before dinner, I had some talk with him about his ailments. As I had expected, he had nothing serious the matter with him, and was only suffering from indulgence in a mode of life to which his feeble constitution was not adapted.

"There is no need for you to come to stay here, you know," I said. "All you want is to lead a quiet life, and avoid wine and late hours. If you do that, you will soon get well."

"And if I don't, Gosden, what then?" he answered, in his thin, high-pitched voice. "Hang it all! You talk as though it were nothing; but it is no joke to a fellow to have to give up pleasures at my age."

"If you don't, you will die sooner or later—that's all."

His face fell considerably at this statement.

"Die!" he said. "*Die!* How brutally you talk! And yet you just said that there was nothing much the matter with me; though I tell you, I do feel ill, dreadfully ill! Sometimes I am so bad, especially in the mornings, that I could almost cry. What shall I do to cure myself?"

"I will tell you. Get married, drink nothing but claret, and get to bed every night at ten."

"Get married!" he gasped. "Oh! But it's an awful thing to do, it ties a fellow up so! Besides, I don't know who to marry."

At this moment our conversation was broken off by Fanny's entrance. She was dressed in an evening gown, with a red flower in her dark, shining hair, and looked what she was, a most striking and imposing woman. Her beauty is of the imperial order, and lies more in her presence, and if I may use the word about a woman, her atmosphere, than her features, and I saw with a smile that it quite overcame my little patient, who stammered and stuttered, and held out his wrong hand when I introduced him. It turned out afterward that he had been under the impression that Miss Denelly was an elderly housekeeper. At dinner, however, he recovered his equilibrium and began to chatter away about all sorts of things, with a sort of low cleverness which was rather amusing, though I confess that being old-fashioned, I could not keep pace with it. Fanny, however, entered into his talk in a manner which astonished me. I had no idea that her mind was so versatile, or that she knew anything about billiards and horse-racing, or even French novels.

At ten o'clock I told Mr. Joseph he had better begin his cure by going to bed, and this he did reluctantly enough. When he had gone, I asked Fanny what she thought of him!

"Think of him!" she answered, looking up, for she was plunged in one of her reveries. "Oh! I think that he is a mixture between a fox and a fool, and the ugliest little man I ever saw!"

I laughed at this complimentary summary, and we set to work.

After this first evening I neither saw nor heard much of Mr. Joseph, except at meals. Fanny looked after him, and when she was at work he amused himself by sitting in an arm-chair and reading French novels in a translation, for preference. Once he asked permission to come in and see us work, and after about half an hour of it he went, saying that it was awfully clever, but "all rot, you know," and that we had much better devote our talents to making books on the Derby.

"Idiot!" remarked Fanny, in a tone of withering contempt, when the door had closed on him; and that was the only opinion I heard her express with reference to him till the catastrophe came.

One morning, when Joseph had been with us about a fortnight, having been at work very late on the previous night, and feeling tired and not too well, I did not come down to breakfast till ten o'clock. Usually, we breakfasted at half-past eight. To my surprise, I found that the tea was not made, and that Fanny had apparently not yet had her breakfast. This was a most unusual occurrence, and while I was still wondering what it could mean, she came into the room with her bonnet and cloak on.

"Why, my dear Fanny!" I said, "where on earth have you been?"

"To church," she answered, coolly, with a dark little smile.

"What have you been doing there?" I asked again.

"Getting married," was the reply.

I gasped for breath, and the room seemed to swim round me.

"Surely, you are joking," I said, faintly.

"Oh! not at all. Here is my wedding-ring," and she held up her hand; "I am Mrs. Hide-Thompson!"

"What!" I almost shrieked. "Do you mean to tell me that you have married that little wretch? Why, he has only been in the house ten days."

"Sixteen days," she corrected, "and I have been engaged to him for ten, and weary work it has been, I can tell you, Geoffrey!"

"Then I suppose you are going away?" I jerked out. "And how about our work, and—John?"

I saw a spasm of pain pass over her face at the mention of the boy's name; for I believe that she loved the poor cripple child, if she ever did really love anything.

"The work must take care of itself, Geoffrey. You must discover the Secret of Life yourself; or perhaps you had better put the whole thing in the fire and go back to practice. At any rate, it has served my turn, and I have done with it!"

"I don't understand you!" I answered, sinking into a chair. "Perhaps if you are not in too great a hurry you will explain a little."

"Of course I will, when I have poured out your tea. There now, listen, and I will give you a lesson in human nature, which, with all your brains, you very much want, Geoffrey. I have been in this house for fourteen years, and I will begin by telling you that from the day that I came in till to-day, when I go out, you have never understood me in the least. You have always looked upon me as a simple-minded woman of intellectual capacity, and with a genius for mathematics, and no aims beyond the discovery of scientific secrets. Now, I will tell you. When I first came to this house as a girl of fourteen, I fell in love with you. You need not look astonished—young girls sometimes do that sort of things. You were good looking in those days, and very clever, as you are now; and then you were really and truly a gentleman, and one sees so few gentlemen—I always think they are the scarcest people in the world!

"Well, I nursed my secret passion and held it so tight that neither you nor your wife even guessed it. Even in those days I could form a clear opinion, and I saw that she would not live long, and that the time would come when I should step into her shoes. So I played upon her weak points, to strengthen my hold over her, and waited. In due course the time came. You were a long time before you proposed to me after her death, and your head was so full of your work that I believe you would have been longer, had I not, by means that were imperceptible to you, kept continually turning your mind into that channel. Even then you did not love me as I wanted to be loved; but I knew that this would come after marriage. And then came the crash, and the sudden appearance of an obstacle against which no scheme of mine could prevail, overwhelmed and confused me, filling me with a sense of impotence that I have never experienced before or since. If you could know, Geoffrey, what a flood of unutterable contempt rushed into my mind, as I heard you maundering on about your scruples and posterity! It drowned my passion. I felt that I was well rid of a man who could in cold blood give me up to satisfy what he was pleased to call his conscience! But perhaps you will never quite know or understand how near I went to killing you that night!'

Here I started—the whole thing was like a nightmare. Fanny laughed.

"Don't be frightened," Fanny went on; "there's nothing more melodramatic to come. I am glad to say that prudential considerations prevailed! Well, after that fiasco, I reviewed the position and determined to stay on—partly from habit, partly on account of John—partly, indeed chiefly, because I was still foolish enough to believe in the Secret of Life business, and foresaw that when it did succeed my name would be made, and that I should then, backed by them by my personal appearance and capacity, be able to marry whom I liked, or, if I preferred it, not to marry, but to follow any career in life that might recommend itself to me.

"At last, however, the end came. I lost all faith in our work, and saw that you and I had only been making fools of ourselves; and consequently I determined to sever a connection that could not bring me credit or profit, either now or in the future, and, being a woman, the only way that I could possibly sever it with advantage was by marriage. For a long time I could not fall in with anybody rich enough; when at last a happy accident brought the man within my reach—by the way, I had thought of him for several years—and, of course, I took my chance, and married him before anybody could interfere. What is more, I actually persuaded him to enter into an engagement to settle four thousand a year to my separate use; so you see I shall in reality be totally independent of the the man!"

"And what do you mean to do with yourself now?" I asked, feebly.

"Do! I mean to bask in the sunshine and drink the wine of life—to know what pleasure and power mean, to live and become rich and great, and avenge myself upon everybody who has ever slighted or injured me! Oh, yes, I shall do it, too! I shall use even that miserable little Joseph, whom I just now had the pleasure of promising to love, honor and obey, as a means to advance myself. He is a poor creature, but sharp enough to be a member of Parliament, you know.

"That reminds me, he is waiting for me at his club; he was afraid to come back and face you, so I must be going. Well, good-bye, Geoffrey; I hope that you will think kindly of me sometimes, notwithstanding it all, and although I have for the first time in my life indulged in the luxury of telling you everything that is in my mind. Ah, you don't know what a luxury it is to be able to speak the truth just for once! Do you know, now that I am going to leave you—it is very odd—but I almost feel as though I loved you again, as I used to so many years ago! At least I am glad to have spent all this time with you, though it was often dreary enough, because I know that I shall never meet a man like you again, and my mind leaves you hardened and braced and polished by contact with your bright intellect, and by the constant study and application you have insisted on till it has become a second nature to me. I shall miss you, Geoffrey, but not so much as you will miss me. You will be miserable without me, and no other woman can ever fill my place, because I do not believe that you can find any who is my equal in intellectual resource. You see what happens to people who indulge in scruples! Are you not sorry that you did not marry me now?"

"Fanny," I answered, solemnly, for by this time I comprehended the whole horror of the position, "I thank the Providence which preserved me from joining my life to that of a woman so wicked as yourself!"

"Really, Geoffrey, you are quite energetic! I suppose that you are piqued at my going. Well, I must be going, but before I go I will lay down a little axiom for your future guidance; I fear you will think it cynical, but the truth is often cynical. 'Never trust a woman again. Remember that she always has a motive. If she is under twenty-five, seek for it in her passions; after that in her self interest.'"

At this moment her face changed, and as it did I heard the tap! tap! of poor John's crutches as he came down the passage. The door opened and the boy entered—a feeble, undersized lad, with a pinched-up white face and a pair of beautiful blue eyes.

"Cousin Fanny," he said (he always called her cousin), as he entered, "where are you? I have been looking for you everywhere. Why have they been taking away your big box? You are not going away to stay without me, are you?"

"Your cousin is going away for good, John," I said; and next moment I regretted it, for it was dreadful to see the look of agony that came upon the poor lad's face. He loved Fanny with all the strength of his sensitive and exaggerated nature, and for years had scarcely been able to bear her absence. even for a day.

"Oh, *no! no!*" he screamed, hobbling up to her and catching hold of her dress in his hands. "Don't say you're going, cousin! You can't go and leave me behind."

"Geoffrey," she said in a choked voice, "let me take the boy with me. He is my weak point. I love him as though he were my own. Let me take him. He shall be looked after!"

"I had rather see him dead!" I answered, sternly, little guessing how soon I should be taken at my word. She stooped down and kissed the lad, and then turned and went swiftly—almost at a run. He seized his crutches and limped down the passage after her at an astonishing pace, calling her by name as he went, till presently one of the crutches slipped, and he fell helpless upon the stone flooring, and lay there, still screaming to her through the hall door, which she slammed behind her When I reached him he was in a fit!

The whole thing formed the most horrible, and in its way the most tragic scene that I ever saw; and I often dream of it even now. And here I may add that my poor boy never recovered from the shock. He lingered three months and then died in his sleep, apparently from pure inanition. Well, it was a merciful release from a life of almost constant pain!

That was the last time that I ever saw Fanny Denelly, or rather Fanny Hide-Thompson.

VI.

When John had temporarily recovered under the treatment that I had applied, seeing that I could do nothing else for him, I gave him a sleeping-draught, and as soon as it had taken effect, I went down-stairs into the study in a very strange state of mind. I felt as though I had received some dreadful physical shock. I had believed in and trusted Fanny as I had trusted no other woman on earth, except my dear wife, and the lurid light in which she now suddenly revealed herself after these long years positively staggered and blinded me! And yet, after it all, I was astonished to find that I remained fond of the woman, and missed her dreadfully. Indeed, it was a year or more before I got over the feeling, and then I only did it by the exercise of great self-control. I had grown to depend upon her so entirely that her help and society seemed a necessity to me, quite alone as I was in the world. Indeed, had it not been for my own rather well-developed pride, I do not think I should ever have got over it. But this came to the rescue. I could not bear to reflect that I was intellectually and socially bound to the chariot wheels of a woman who had for years been making a tool of me, and who was, after all, my inferior. And so by degrees I did get over it; but it has left its mark on me—yes, it has left its mark!

And then it was on that same disastrous morning that a wonder happened, so strangely and opportunely, that I have at times been almost inclined to attribute it to the direct interference of Providential Power. When I was worn out with thinking, I turned to my work,

more from habit than anything else, I think, only to be once more overcome by the reflection that there too I was helpless. The work could not go on without the calculations, and who was to do them now that Fanny had deserted me? I could not, and it would be the task of years to teach anybody else, however clever, for the understanding of them had grown with the experience. Besides this, I could never afford to pay a man of the necessary ability. It appeared, therefore, that there was an end of my search for the Secret of life, to which I had devoted the best years of my precarious existence. It was all but lost labor, and would benefit neither myself nor mankind. This conviction rushed upon me as I stood there by the pile of papers; then for the first time I quite broke down under the accumulated weight of sorrows, and, putting my hands before my face, I sobbed like a child! The paroxysm passed, and with it passed, too, all my high ambitions. I must give it up, and go back a failure to what little practice I could get, until such time as the end came.

As I stooped to gather up the various papers, I noticed that on the table before me lay a great sheet of Fanny's calculations, which she had been employed upon the previous night. The top of the sheet was covered with two dense armies of figures and symbols, marching this way and that, but toward the bottom they thinned out wonderfully, till there remained two little lines only of those that had survived the crooked ways of mathematical war. Evidently she had thrown down her pen (as she sometimes would) just before the termination of the problem, which I was aware she had been engaged on for several days. I knew but little of the higher mathematics, but I could see that if the left-hand line were subtracted from the right, the difference would be the result sought for, provided the problem had been worked out without error. I took a pencil and did this idly enough. The first time I made a mistake, but even with the mistake the result was sufficiently startling to make me rub my eyes. I did it again, and then sank back into the chair behind me with a gasp, and trembling as though I had unwittingly raised a ghost!

And no wonder. For there before me was the Key to the great Secret for which we had been wearily seeking so many years! There was no mistake about it! I knew what it ought to be, and what conditions it must fulfill; and there it was, the last product of scores of sheets of abstruse calculations based upon laws that could not lie. There it was! She had stopped just short of it, and at length I had triumphed!—the last obstacle to success, complete, absolute success, was gone! I had wrung the answer to the great question which torments the world from the stony heart of the almighty law that governs it!

"If she had known this, Fanny would not have gone!" I said aloud, and then, what between one thing and another, I fainted!

Exactly six months from that day my book, "The Secret of Life," appeared, and everybody will remember the excitement that ensued. Of course, propositions so startling were violently attacked, but I only smiled and waited; for I knew that my conclusions could no more be seriously disputed than the law of gravitation. And now the attackers are all silent, and mankind (I say it without false modesty and without pride) blesses the man who, through the goodness of Providence, has been the means of demonstrating the glorious cause and objects of our hitherto inexplicable existence, and of supplying the key to the mystery of life, and the agony of death, that is, as the religions foreshadowed, but the portal to the larger and more perfect life. Yes! My work is done, and well done, and I can die in peace, knowing that even here I shall never be forgotten!

A week after the book appeared, I received from Fanny this rather weakly worded letter:

"DEAR GEOFFREY," it began, "so you have found it! And you have had the generosity to publicly acknowledge my share in the work; and my name will go down to future generations linked with yours! It is more than I deserve, though it is just what I should have expected from you. Had I known how near we were to success, I would never have gone away. I am very wealthy, and, in a small, unsatisfactory fashion, powerful, also, as I told you I should be, and shall be more so soon. Joseph has got into Parliament, where, notwithstanding the competition, I think that his entire want of principle ought to carry him a long way. And yet, Geoffrey, I miss you as much as ever, and almost long for the old days. It is hard to have to mix with a set of fools, who smile and gabble, but cannot even understand what it is that we, or rather you, have done. I was so sorry to hear about John. Well, we must each to our own fate. Good-bye. FANNY."

I returned no answer to this letter, nor have I ever seen Fanny since, and I hope I never shall see her again! Of course, everybody has a right to look after his or her own interests, and on this ground I do not like to think too hardly of her. I used to believe that there was a great deal of prejudiced nonsense talked about women, and that they were as capable of real and good work and of devotion to a single end as we men are. Many and many is the argument that I have had with Fanny herself on this point, for she was wont scornfully to declare that marriage was the average woman's one object in life, and the education of a family the one thing she was capable of carrying out in a satisfactory manner. But now I confess that my belief is shaken, though I know that it is unjust to judge a great and widely differing class from the experience of an individual. And, after all, she was well within her right, and it is impossible to blame her. I had absolutely no claim upon her, and she was undoubtedly wise to provide for herself in life, when so good an opportunity came in her way. It was a little abrupt, and her explanations were rather cynical; but I have no cause of complaint. I could not marry her myself; why should I have objected to her marrying anybody else—even that young man Joseph?

And yet, and I only say it to show how weak I am, I am still fond of Fanny Hide-Thompson, and still feel sad when I think of her sudden and final departure. Next to my wife's death, it has been the greatest shock of my life. If she had stopped with me, she should have had her full share in my triumph, and of all the honors and good things that have followed on its heels. She overcalculated herself, she saw too far, and yet not far enough. But I dare say that, after all, this is but another form of the personal vanity to which I fear I am constitutionally liable, and, as such, a weakness to be mortified, especially when a man is hobbling as fast as I am toward the quiet church-yard gates. Well, this is the true history of my relations with Fanny Denelly.

[THE END.]

WINNER or Loser?—George—"Would you marry me under any circumstances?" Maud—"No; why do you ask?" George—"Just to decide a bet."—*Puck.*

JINNY.

SHE had no paw ner maw
Ner any brood ner kin,
'N that's huccome it happened
Thet we all took her in,
A poor, peaked little critter,
Red-headed, pale an' thin,

Six boys thar was o' we uns,
An' pap he used to 'gree
Thet five of us wus likely
As you would wish to see;
An' one of us wus slowly,
An' thet thar one wus me.

An' Jinny used to pleg me
For bein' big an' lean.
All hands an' feet an' freckles,
The thickest ever seen.
She jedged 'twas only sunburn
Kept me from lookin' green.

First off I didn't mind it,
Them funnin' ways of hern,
But when she took to growin'
Like a slim young forest fern,
An' did her hair up on top, why
Her jokes began to burn.

I knowd I wasn't nothin'
Set off 'ginst John an' Jim,
An' Bud, well, he was sightly,
An' Ted, I looked at him,
An' sensed his chance with Jinny
Wus big an' mine wus slim.

So I 'lowed to never mention
How much I keered for her;
Cuz I jedge to pine in secret
It passes easier
Then to pine with folks a-knowin'
Just what you're pinin' fer.

I tried a friendly manner
An' talked with her right smart
About her beaux an' reckoned
She hedn't any heart;
An' one day when I said so
Her eyes eyes flew wide apart.

In a suddint, cur'us fashion,
An' the blue looked wet, an' she
Wus pink as any rose bush,
An' I, well, when I see
Thet blush, the truth is
She's goin' to marry me!

—*St. Louis Critic.*

ACTING COLTY.

A MAN who appeared to be at least sixty-five years old, and was lame and gray and almost toothless, entered a Michigan avenue barber shop the other day and said:

"Guess I'll kinder slick up a little for the spring campaign. Guess you may shave me."

"See here," said the barber, as he got seated in the chair, "let me go ahead and fix you up just as if you were going to get married to-night."

"Say! Did anybody tell ye?" whispered the old man.

"No, not exactly."

"But you tumbled."

"Yes."

"Kinder give myself away by acting so colty, eh?"

"That's it."

"Well, it's coming off to-night, and I suppose I orter to fix up a leetle. How old would you judge I am?"

"Well, you see, you have sort o' gone to seed by neglecting your appearance. I can fix you so you won't look a day older than—than fifty."

"You kin! How much?"

"Well, shaving, hair-cutting and dying will cost you a dollar and a half."

"Go in? Put on a little extra dye and call it $2! Guess I do look purty old in the face, but you can fix me up there, and I'll throw away this cane; rub up my legs with liniment and for the next week I'll jump off a street car without its stopping or break my back trying!"—*Chicago Herald.*

SPLINTERS.

A CONFESSION.—Aunt Mabel—"Why, Johnny, how the sun has tanned you!" Johnny—"N[illegible] it wasn't the sun that tanned me. It was papa[illegible]"—*Munsey's Weekly.*

TO SHOOT ANNIE ROONEY.—Prof. Half Rest[illegible] a park concert)—"Why these unrestrained tea[illegible] my friend? Have you received sudden bad [illegible]ings, that you sob aloud in a public plac[illegible] Happy Whiskers.—"They are tears of j[illegible] old man! See that programme: 'Little An[illegible] Rooney to be executed by the military ban[illegible] 2:30.' To think the little cuss is dead at [illegible]! It's too good to be true. Tell 'em to dig[illegible] grave deep, stranger!" [Exits, weeping ec[illegible]ically.]—*Judge.*

THANKSGIVING IN THE OLD HOME.

LIKE the patient moss to the rifted hill
The wee brown house is clinging;
A last year's nest that is lone and still,
Though it first was filled with singing.
Then fleet were the children's patting feet,
And their trilling childish laughter,
And merry voices were sweet, oh! sweet,
Ringing from floor to rafter.

The beautiful darlings one by one,
From the nest's safe shelter flying,
Went forth in the sheen of the morning sun,
Their fluttering pinions trying.
But oft as the reaping time is o'er,
And the hoar-frost crisps the stubble,
They haste to the little crib once more
From the great world's toil and trouble.

And the mother herself is at the pane,
With a hand the dim eye shading,
And the flush of girlhood tints again
The cheek that is thin and fading.
For her boys and girls are coming home,
The mother's kiss their guerdon,
As they came ere yet they had learned to roam,
Or bowed to the task and burden.

Over the door's worn sill they troop,
The skies of youth above them,
The blessing of God on the happy group,
Who have mother left to love them.
They well may smile in the face of care,
To whom such grace is given:
A mother's faith and a mother's prayer,
Holding them close to heaven.

For her, as she clasps her bearded son;
With a heart that's brimming over,
She's tenderly blending two in one,
Her boy and her boyish lover.
And half of her soul is reft away,
So twine the dead and the living,
In the little home wherein to-day,
Her children keep Thanksgiving.

There are tiny hands that pull her gown,
And small heads bright and golden;
The childish laugh and the childish frown,
And the dimpled fingers folden,
That brings again to the mother breast
The spell of the sunny weather,
When she hushed her brood in the crowded nest,
And all were glad together.

A truce to the jarring notes of life,
The cries of pain and passion,
Over this lull in the eager strife,
Love hovers, Eden fashion.
In the wee brown house were lessons taught
Of strong and sturdy living,
And ever where honest hearts have wrought,
God hears the true Thanksgiving.

—*Margaret E. Sangster.*

The Secret Panel.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

THAT extensive range of lofty hills in the northern parts of Germany, known as the Hartz Mountains, has for centuries been made the scene of various ghostly transactions; and thousands of German peasants at the present day regard some portion of this territory as a *bona fide* spirit land. The traveler who may chance to rest beneath any of the hospitable roofs in this vicinity will find ample material for the foundation of romance and novelty, provided he will give his kind hostess an hour or two of patient listening. Most of the legends of these mountains are deeply affecting—some of them are within the bounds of reason; but generally they are rather beyond the ken of rational visions. Yet, for all their improbability, the greater portion of them rest upon the basis of solid facts.

In the story we are about to relate some of that material which superstition weaves into the fabric of wonder, is necessarily introduced; but yet we shall leave the reader in none of those unsettled moods which are the result of "things not understood."

Near the northern extremity of the Hartz Mountains is situated the city of Wolfenbuttel, which is the capital of a principality bearing the same name. The castle, which has since been the residence of a somewhat powerful line of dukes, was, in the year 1668, in possession of the Baron Waldrec, a brave old soldier of the iron stamp. He had no family of his own, and to have some object upon which to rest his warm affections, he had taken beneath his roof the family of his younger brother, Rudolph, who lived mostly on the bounty of the baron. The baroness had mysteriously disappeared some nineteen years before, and was supposed to have been drowned, and that, too, at a time when her husband was expecting her shortly to present him with an heir.

One evening Sir Rudolph returned from a somewhat protracted visit to the country, and immediately summoned his eldest daughter, Theresa, to attend him in the large chamber in the western wing of the castle. There was anxiety and something akin to fear stamped upon Rudolph's countenance, as he passed up and down the chamber, waiting for the arrival of his daughter. When she at length came, he commenced:

"Well, Theresa, I have seen the young baronet, Sir Frederic Enstein, and have ascertained the long cause of his absence from us."

"And what can it be, father?"

"You would hardly guess the truth; but yet it is nothing strange, after all. The fact is, he has by some means discovered that we aimed at a union between him and yourself; and his affections being already engrossed in a fair damsel whom chance has thrown in his way, he deems it injudicious to—"

"Ah, yes, I see," interrupted Theresa; "he fears that I should form an unrequited attachment, and that, too, for *him*; so he is magnanimous enough not to trust his captivating self near me."

"But I thought you really loved Frederic Enstein."

"So I *did*; but do you think that I can be made to bow beneath a man's neglect? No. Sir Frederic Enstein shall find that *I* at least, can brook his neglect. But who is this favored damsel?"

"There is the pith of the matter. It is the daughter of old Joseph, the gardener."

"So he has taken a fancy to some *rural, unsophisticated* maid, has he? I'll thwart him."

"My daughter, there is something deeper than mere love and pique in this matter. My brother has made his will, and this same Frederic Enstein is to come in possession of nearly one half of the whole estate, leaving the rest to be equally divided among my three sons, reserving for yourself and me only a small annual income. It appears that Frederic served under him during his last campaign, and twice saved his life. The emperor bestowed a baronetcy upon him in honor of his bravery, and the baron has taken it into his head to finish the work, by awarding to him a princely portion. Do you not see how much we both lose through this young man?"

For some moments the fair girl seemed lost in deep thought. At length, raising her large dark eyes full to the face of her father, she asked, in slow and measured tones:

"But is there not *something* back of all that you have mentioned—something deeper still than wills and bestowments?"

Sir Rudolph trembled—then turned pale. He gazed fixedly into the face of his daughter, but could discern nothing there save a steady, inquiring expression. He composed himself, and asked:

"What does your question aim at? I certainly fail to comprehend your meaning."

"O, nothing; I merely asked the question because I thought something appeared to weigh at times upon your mind; and if I am to assist you in any plan, it is but right that I should know the actual state of affairs, so that I may work understandingly."

"You have already heard all that is necessary; and if you possess that pride which belongs to your nature, you will second my plan."

"And what is that plan?"

"It is to remove the girl who holds so much power over Frederic."

"Ah, yes; I understand." For a moment Theresa hesitated, but at length added: "You must concoct your plan, and then let me know it. In the meantime I would be left alone."

As the door closed upon the retiring form of his daughter, Sir Rudolph commenced pacing back and forth in an uneasy study. He little knew the spirit with which he had to deal. Theresa was at heart a noble girl; but she knew that her father meditated some scheme of iniquity, and she was determined to frustrate it if possible; and in order to do this, she must seemingly acquiesce until she could get fully acquainted with his plans. There was one other thing she wished to understand. She had seen enough to satisfy her that some unfair means had already been adopted by her father. He seemed troubled at times, and would frequently lock himself up in his chamber during a whole day. Besides all this, Theresa had plighted her vows of affection to Colonel Walstein, a young officer who frequently visited her uncle. It pained her to be obliged to dissemble before her parent, but she deemed that circumstances fully justified her.

Sir Rudolph still continued to pace up and down the large apartment. The gray twilight was fast deepening into darker shades, and Rudolph's mind seemed to correspond with the sombre hues that were gathering around. Occasionally he would stop and clasp his hands over his forehead—then start forward again—his mind seemed troubled, and some phantom appeared to be constantly riding upon his memory. He approached the extremity of the chamber, and was about to turn, when he raised his eyes. An exclamation of horror burst from his lips, and he started back, trembling in every limb. There, before him, stood an object that struck terror to his soul. It was the *Spirit of the Hartz Mountains*. How she came, or whither, he heeded not; but the object of her intrusion—what was it? People said her presence boded no good, and he certainly was in no frame of mind to feel easy under her piercing gaze. She spoke:

"Rudolph Waldrec, *beware!*"

"Who are you, and what would you with me?" gasped the stricken man.

"I am one who knows you well. Your whole life is a plain tale to me."

He strained his starting eye-balls to their utmost tension to pierce beneath those long matted locks; but he only saw her gleaming eyes, and her thin finger, as it was raised menacingly toward him.

"Rudolph Waldrec, years ago I saw a woman drowning—I heard her scream in the agony of despair. She *might* have been saved. Did *you* see it?"

"Woman—fiend—devil! whatever you be you cannot—"

He did not finish the sentence; he started back and rubbed his eyes—but she was gone; where or how he could not divine. All was still save the beatings of his own heart.

The cot of old Joseph, the gardener, was situated at the foot of a large mountain, and thither Theresa Waldrec bent her steps early on the morning succeeding her interview with her father. She knocked at the door, and was answered by the old man himself. She desired to see and speak with his daughter, and was kindly introduced into the house and invited to take a seat. She was left alone a few moments, when the door opened and a young girl entered, who bade the visitor welcome, and reported herself as the person sought after. She was a noble looking girl, cast in nature's healthiest mold; and from her full brow and gleaming eyes there shone forth a mind and soul of humanity. Theresa wondered not that Frederic Enstein should love the girl before her, and in a moment she had determined that no scheme of her father's should cast its evil on her head. "You may be somewhat surprised," continued Theresa, as her companion seated herself, "that I should thus seek you; but I have something of importance to communicate. To be frank, I will come at once to the business of my visit. Does not Frederic Enstein sometimes visit here?"

The fair girl blushed, and for a moment was deeply perplexed; but a pure heart has nothing to fear; and she frankly answered:

"He does."

"And did he ever mention to you the name of Theresa Waldrec?"

"He has, lady."

"He has told you that she desired his hand in marriage?"

"No; his remarks touching that lady have ever been friendly and respectful. But—"

"But what? I am the lady in question, and I assure you that I have the best of motives in thus addressing you."

"Well, then, he has made some allusion to a desire of your father to that effect, but you were not included in the affair."

"I thank you, my fair friend, for your frankness, and will tell you why I sought you. It is true that my father desires the union of Frederic and myself, but my desires lay not that way. I love him as a brother, but my faith is already plighted to another. Frederic is worthy your best love and esteem, and you shall have my influence to make you happy."

The young girl laid her head upon the bosom of her visitor and wept. She poured out her gratitude in blessings, and thanked her warmly for her kindness.

"And now," continued Theresa, as she rose to depart, "some steps may be taken to prevent this union; but trust to me, and all my power shall be at your service. But I do not yet know your name."

"Euphemia Rothburt, my kind lady."

"I shall never forget that name. My uncle's wife was called Euphemia. But farewell for the present. I shall see you again ere long."

Theresa left the cot with a glad heart. She

had made a fellow-creature happier by her visit, and she felt truly rewarded. Her path home lay through a long park that belonged to the castle, and as she was passing along, meditating upon the incidents of her visit, she felt a hand laid lightly upon her shoulder, and turning suddenly around, she beheld the *Spirit of the Hartz Mountains*. She had never seen the spirit before; but she had often heard a description of the form which this wanderer took when she desired to clothe herself with a material body; and she could not doubt that she now stood in her presence. Her doubts, if any she had, were removed as the intruder addressed her.

"Lady, be not alarmed. Men call me a wandering spirit, and so I am; but they also say that I would harm them—which is not true. I am with the guilty, and stir up the soul with remorse; but the pure and innocent have nothing to fear. I know the situation in which you are placed; I know the conversation that took place last evening between yourself and your father—nay, start not—I heard it all. You will ere long want assistance, and I will be near to render it; and in the meantime I would have you prepare your feelings for a severe trial. Your father's every feeling is a crime—it has grown upon him."

"Pray explain to me, if you can," exclaimed Theresa, tremblingly, seizing the old woman's arm, "what is it that weighs so heavily upon my father's mind?"

"No, not now, lady; but you shall know ere long. You have nothing to fear from his interposition against your wishes; his present plans can never succeed, fortify them as he will. There is an eye upon his movements he wots not of. Farewell."

The old woman waved her hand as Theresa attempted to speak, and disappeard amongst the shrubbery. The fair girl pursued her way towards the castle in a thoughtful mood, somewhat surprised, withal, that she had not been alarmed at the presence of the wandering spirit; but her anxiety was in another direction, and she had felt only surprise and curiosity, where there might otherwise have been alarm. When she arrived at the courtyard she found a number of horses just arrived, and was informed that the riders had gone into the castle. Her heart leaped with a quick motion as she recognized the livery of Colonel Walstein, and hastily entering the building, she sought her own chamber, and prepared to meet the visitors.

An hour afterwards Walstein and Theresa were wandering together in the park. She told her lover all that had happened, even to her interview with the mountain spirit, and begged of him to remain till matters were settled. She had a fearful foreboding that some dreadful calamity was about to break over her head; she knew not what, neither had she least idea of its nature or source; but she could read in the aspect of things about her a tale of woe.

Shortly after we left Walstein and Theresa in the park, Baron Waldrec left his room and sought his brother. The baron was a powerfully built man, about fifty years of age, with a frank, benevolent countenance, upon which were marked in unmistakable characters, a noble soul and a stout heart. He found his brother sitting moodily in his own chamber, and drawing a chair to his side, addressed him:

"Come, Rudolph, why are you so melancholy lately? What has happened that should thus keep you confined? I am about to relinquish my command in the army, and shall in future keep you company most of the time; but you must throw off this moody fit and be yourself. Why, the people tell me that you do nothing lately but mope around the castle like a man hunting for his brains; and here I have been at home a week, and have not had your company an hour since I arrived."

Rudolph felt uneasy under the gaze of the baron's eye, nor could he look into his frank, open countenance, without trembling, and when he learned that his brother had resigned his post in the service, and was to make the castle his future field of operations, he drew a quick breath and turned a shade paler.

"I am really glad that you are to remain with us," replied Rudolph, composing himself as much as possible; "but I am not well. If I am not so friendly as I should be, you will know what cause to attribute it to—to the fact that I am laboring under a severe indisposition."

"I am sorry that you are so unfortunate," replied the baron, "but you will soon recover, I trust, and then we may expect your company. I have a subject, however, that I desire to speak to you upon at the present time, and I am in hopes that you will give it your candid consideration. You are well acquainted with my friend, Colonel Walstein, who has just arrived here, and who intends to spend a short time at the castle. He is a fine young fellow, and is an honor to his country, and I feel proud in acknowledging his friendship. He has long cherished an attachment for your daughter, and—why, what is the matter? Why do you stare so—are you ill?"

"No, no; say nothing to me of this."

"Why, what has possessed you, my dear brother! I was about to ask you to give your daughter's hand to this young man; her heart I am sure he already possesses—and I do not certainly see anything objectionable in the proposition. Theresa is old enough to be married, and Egbert Walstein would make her a good husband."

"Do not urge this matter further—at least, till I have seen my daughter; for she has never spoken of such a matter to me, and this is the first intimation that I have had of it."

The baron was surprised at his brother's extraordinary behavior, and was at a loss to divine its cause. He saw, however, that there was something deeper than he could hope to fathom, and he deemed it expedient to act for the present upon Rudolph's suggestion, and wait till he had spoken with his daughter upon the subject.

It was growing dark as the baron left his brother's room, and after spending an hour or two with his guests, during which time he explained to Walstein the result of his late interview, he sought his chamber, and was about to retire for the night, when he heard a slight tap upon the door, which he answered by a kind "Come in."

The door opened, and Theresa Waldrec entered and took a seat by the side of her uncle.

"What has started you out, my fair niece?" mildly asked the baron.

"Do not think me forward, dear uncle; but Egbert has told me that you have seen my father, and has also informed me of the result of your conference. Now I feel sure that I can unbosom my case to you without fear of ill."

"That you can, dear girl," tenderly replied the old baron, laying his hand upon her head, and gazing with a fond look into her face.

"Well then, before I see my father, I desire that you should know on what principle he is acting. I would not expose my father's fault, were it not necessary to preserve myself from participating in it; and besides, I know that I am doing it to one who will be kind and lenient to him."

"You may repose the most implicit confidence in me," remarked the baron, as Theresa hesitated in her recital. "Now go on, and you may be sure of my aid and protection."

"My father has become acquainted with the contents of your will; he informs me that by that instrument Frederic Enstein is one of the principal legatees, while I and himself are only to receive a small annual income. Accordingly, he has set his heart upon my union with Frederic, and seems determined to effect it; and I am to be made a mere tool for the purpose of securing this wealth. Now, how shall I act? I can never marry Enstein, were I so disposed, he loves another."

"Your father's assertions relative to the will are all true; but how he came in possession of the knowledge is more than I can tell. When I made my will I was engaged in war, and my life could hardly be said to be my own; and at that time I expected that Frederic would have been your husband, and had the instrument drawn up accordingly; but since my arrival at the castle, I have found out the true state of affairs, and have some thoughts of altering that will; but without doing that, I shall have enough to make yourself and Walstein comfortable. During my last campaign, I received two heavy ransoms, amounting to over ten thousand ducats, and this I intend to bestow upon you, in the event of your marriage. But your father must not know it—he must act upon a more manly principle."

"O, I thank you, my dear uncle, for your kindness; but how shall I appease my father?"

"Refer him to Frederic Enstein. Tell him that you can do nothing, till he first obtains some sort of an answer from the gentleman in question. But he must be very foolish indeed, when he knows that Frederic is bound by promise to another, thus to persist in his scheme."

Theresa shuddered as she thought of her father's plan in relation to poor Euphemia, and asked her uncle if he knew the girl who thus stood in the way of her father's plans.

"Yes," answered the baron, "and she is one of the loveliest creatures I ever saw; you would love her if you but knew her."

"I trust I shall soon become better acquainted with her; I have seen her. But I hope all will yet be well."

As Theresa retired, the baron went to his desk, and unlocking a small drawer, took therefrom a roll of parchment, which he opened and began to read. It was his will. As he sat meditating upon the disposition therein made of his property, with the instrument lying open upon the table before him, he heard a slight rustling by his side, and on looking up, he started back in amazement, as his eyes rested upon the tall commanding figure of *the Spirit of the Hartz Mountains*.

"Baron Waldrec, that instrument is null and void."

"How, woman?" exclaimed he, as he collected his scattered senses. "What brought you here? You certainly came not in at the door. Is it true, then, that you ride about upon the wind?"

"Never mind *how* I came here; but *wherefore* you shall know. Again I tell you, that instrument is good for nothing."

"Perhaps you can tell me why?"

The stout baron trembled beneath the piercing gaze of his strange visitor; why, he could not tell; he was unused to fear; but as he saw the gleaming eyes peering out from beneath the thick-matted hair that hung down over her face and shoulders, his heart beat tumultuously.

"You shall know what you require soon enough," replied the intruder; "but not now. You owe me a pledge, and thus I claim its redemption."

Saying this, she took the parchment from the table and commenced tearing it in pieces.

"Now, by my faith," exclaimed the baron, as he started forward, "you go too far."

"Stand back, Baron Waldrec. Look here!"

And she threw the heavy mantle from off her bosom, upon which glittered a heavy jewelled cross.

"What!" faintly gasped the baron as he sank trembling into his chair, and pressed his hand upon his burning brow, "the vision of my fearful dream?"

"'Twas *not* a dream, Waldrec."

He removed his hand from his brow, and looked up; but his visitor was gone.

Rudolph Waldrec had spoken with his daughter upon the subject of her marriage with Frederic Enstein, and had also informed her that she must not think for a moment of young Walstein. Theresa could not forbear weeping; but she expressed no wish to her father—neither did she say aught against his proprosals; but she merely desired that he would speak with Frederic, and obtain from him some word in relation to the affair, before he pressed her further. To this he consented, and without further remark withdrew.

It was in the middle of the day that Rudolph took his way towards the cot of Joseph Rothburt. He found the old man in, and entering and closing the doors, he seated himself by his side, and opened upon the business of his visit.

"You have a daughter, called Euphemia, have you not?"

"I have," replied the old man.

"Could you allow her to visit the castle for a few days? The Lady Theresa desires her attendance."

"Well, that depends pretty much upon her own decision. I will call her and see."

The girl was called, and upon being questioned, she expressed a ready willingness to accompany their visitor, provided her father would go to the castle with her. This did not exactly suit the purpose of Rudolph; but he had no alternative, and accordingly he made no objection to the plan proposed, and the little party soon set out for the walk. They had not proceeded more than half way through the long park, when a slight rustling in the bushes caused old Joseph to turn his head, and at that moment he was seized in the powerful grasp of a man who sprang from the shrubbery, and dragged him to the earth. A second ruffian treated Rudolph in the same manner, while the trembling girl was gagged, and borne off through the park, by a third. Rudolph offered a seeming resistance, but it was slight, and he was easily bound to a neighboring tree, when his captor went to his companion's assistance, and the old man was also securely fastened.

Rudolph cursed and swore, and for about fifteen minutes apparently used every exertion to release himself. At length he managed to get his hands free, and was soon in a situation to assist his neighbor, who had as yet said but very little. When they were both clear of confinement, the old man wept like a child. He was only conscious that he had been robbed of all his earthly comfort, and for a few moments

the thought of pursuit entered not into his head; but a little reflection, and the consolation of his companion, soon aroused him, and he joined in a plan for pursuit. But all search was fruitless; The inmates of the castle were all started out, but to no effect. No traces of the abductors or the girl could be found, and at dark the pursuit was given up.

Theresa heard the tale from her father's lips; but she evaded his questions, and disbelieved his statement. It was hard for her to look her father in the face, for she believed him to be a guilty man, and she embraced the first opportunity to release herself from his presence, and seek her own chamber. Then she gave way to a flood of tears, and amid the conflicting emotions of love and fear, she wept herself to sleep.

That night there were strange noises heard about the old castle. Doors were opened and shut—heavy footsteps resounded through the old archways—and deep down in the bowels of the heavy building resounded low, rumbling moans. About midnight a troop of horsemen arrived, and demanded admittance at the gate. The old porter raised the portcullis, and Frederic Enstein, together with his attendants, entered the courtyard. The baron was soon up, and his young friend received a hearty welcome; but the joy of that welcome was lost, when he received the intelligence of Euphemia's abduction. He had been to the cottage, but could only learn there that old Joseph and his daughter had gone to the castle. He would immediately have started out in search of his promised bride, but the baron dissuaded him from the purpose, and it was settled that in the morning all hands should join in a general and thorough search.

The new-comers were soon ensconced in their respective beds and quietness was beginning to settle down over the castle, when a most piercing cry issued from the chamber of Sir Rudolph. The baron had not fallen asleep, and hastily dressing himself, he proceeded at once to the room of his brother. He found Rudolph sitting up in his bed, with his hands clasped tightly over his eyes, and his limbs trembling at every joint.

"What has happened?" asked the baron, as he stepped near to his brother's bed-side.

"See! there! there!" exclaimed the terror-stricken man, extending his hands toward the further part of the room.

"I see nothing," answered the baron, as he looked in the direction pointed out.

"Thank heaven, she's gone! O, God! what a fearful sight!"

"Why, you've been dreaming, Rudolph."

"*Dreaming?* Yes, 'twas a dream; but the Lord preserve me from another such."

After vainly endeavoring to obtain some explicit statement from his brother of what had really happened, the baron once more sought his pillow, and endeavored to compose himself to sleep.

The morning dawned, and at an early hour the inmates of the castle were assembled in the courtyard, all ready to mount their horses for the contemplated search, when a single horseman approached the gate, and entered. It was a priest. He had promised Frederic he would be in attendance to perform the marriage ceremony. But he found himself called upon to perform a different office—that of administering consolation to a soul deeply afflicted.

Another horse galloped into the court; but a cold shudder ran through the assembly as their eyes rested upon the rider. It was *the Spirit of the Hartz Mountains.* She slid from the saddle, and waving her hand for the people to follow her, she entered the castle and proceeded at once to a large hall, where she was soon joined by the baron and his friends. Rudolph, alone, followed not. The new-comer noticed this, and called for him; but his limbs would hardly support him, and when he had been assisted to the hall, he looked more dead than alive. He dared not meet the gaze of the mountain spirit.

Not a breath broke upon the stillness that reigned in that old hall, as the spectral visitor gazed around upon the assembly. She stooped down and placed her hand upon the edge of a panel near the wall, and with a sudden motion threw it back from its place, and as she stepped back, the form of Euphemia Rothburt issued from the aperture.

Frederic Enstein gave one bound and clasped to his bosom the restored object of his affection. A surprise almost akin to terror was stamped upon the features of the crowd; Rudolph betrayed the keenest anguish. The Mountain Spirit stepped forward, and placing the hand of the fair girl in that of Frederic, she led them to the astonished baron, and said:

"Give them your blessing, Baron Waldrec."

A fervent "God bless my children!" trembled upon the old man's lips.

"Waldrec, *you have blessed your daughter.*"

The long, black robe fell from that strange form—she threw the flowing brown hair back from her face, and gazing for a moment upon the tear-wet features of the baron, she fell with a bursting heart upon his bosom. The old man started back, and gazed for a moment into that face. Then he opened his arms—one word escaped from his lips—"*Euphemia!*" and he clasped to his bosom his long lost wife.

Rudolph Waldrec started from his position—gave one groan and his guilt-burdened spirit was away from earth.

"Poor Rudolph, how much he has suffered," exclaimed the baroness, as she arose from the bosom of her husband and gazed upon the corpse. She continued: "You shall know what all this means. It is now more than nineteen years since I attempted to cross the lake in my little skiff. Rudolph Waldrec saw me overturned within a short distance of the shore, and he might have easily have saved me; but my cries he heeded not, and with a cold look he turned from the bank, and left me to my fate. But an old fortune-teller was near and drew me to the shore; but before she released me, she obtained from me a promise that I would not leave her till she consented. In a few days my child was born, and as I lay upon a rough couch in her hut, gazing with rapture upon the innocent face of my infant, she took it from me, and before she would return it, she had laid me under a most fearful oath. She told me she should die before I left my bed, and I was to take her place—assume her garb and calling, without revealing myself to a living soul till the preservation of a human life rendered it necessary. Her prediction was fulfilled.

"As soon as I was able to go out, I placed my child under the care of Joseph and have since lived upon the hopes this moment realized. Many secret passages well known to myself about the castle have often answered my objects; and hour after hour I have sat by the bed-side of my husband, and drank in pure delight in watching his calm features. Rudolph, too, has been made the recipient of my nocturnal visits. But the danger of my daughter released me from my vow, and I am now happy."

Every heart there beat in joyful concord. Theresa's countenance wore a shade of sadness; but 'twas not deep laid. And the same day that saw Frederic and Euphemia united, beamed also upon the union of Walstein and Theresa.

EFFIE'S THANKSGIVING.

"I GUESS I'll have a Sanksgiving dinner of my very own," said little Effie Angell.

She had been watching with great interest the preparations for the grand dinner at home; the chickens and turkeys, the puddings and pies, and the beautiful red cranberry sauce, all attracted her attention, and filled her with a wish to have a dinner for her own family.

Her family was made up of dolls, a poodle, and a kitten, and a very nice family it was. The dolls were all well behaved and quiet; the kitten was good-tempered, and the poodle was very bright and loving, and was always dressed in white wool.

"I want my Sanksgiving before you have yours," Effie said to her mother, "'cause then you'll be so busy that you cannot help me."

"Very well," said Mrs. Angell; "you can have it to-day, and I will give you some cold chicken and currant jelly and frosted cake. But who are you going to have for guests?"

"Why, Snowflake, and Whitenose, and all the dollies, of course."

"And no little girl or boy?"

"Why, mamma, would you? I didn't think of that."

"I think it would be a nice plan to set your dinner on the little wooden table that stands in my room and invite somebody to eat it with you."

"What, have a real dinner, and not play eat! Why, mamma, I think that would be splendid; but who shall I invite?"

"Whom would you like to invite?"

"There is Clara Weston."

"She has enough to eat at home."

"Why, of course she has, mamma."

"Can't you think of some little girl who is often hungry, because her mamma is poor?"

"Let me see—yes, there is Mamie Hart and Johnny. They don't bring anything to school for lunch but a little thin slice of bread, and sometimes a herring; and they look so pale and poor, mamma."

"Then suppose you invite Mamie and Johnny. I will see that you have enough for them to eat."

Effie was delighted with the idea; and putting on her little jacket and her new hat with the scarlet wing, she hurried to Mrs. Hart's.

The children's eyes sparkled with joy when Effie told her errand, and Mrs. Hart promised that they should attend the dinner in good season.

Then Effie ran home and began her preparations.

Her mamma gave her her little tea-plates, and the smallest knives and forks that she possessed. She had pretty white mugs for drinking cups, and milk in a tiny white pitcher with gold bands.

Mrs. Angell cut up the smallest chicken she had, and put it all on the table. She sliced a plateful of fresh bread, and brought out of her store of preserves two glasses of lovely currant jelly. I cannot tell you how pretty the table looked when it was all set, and a bouquet of roses and geranium leaves put in the centre.

Mamie and Johnny came at the exact time. Snowflake, the poodle, and Whitenose, the kitty, had napkins pinned around their necks, and were put into chairs, by the side of a chair full of dolls.

I must say that the dolls behaved best, though the poodle and the kitten did very well, considering that this was their first Thanksgiving dinner.

Mamie and Johnny ate all the chicken they could, for the first time in their lives, and you can easily believe that there wasn't a bit of jelly left.

They had great fun after dinner, playing school, and meeting, and housekeeping, and when night came, Effie said to her mother:

"I've had a beautiful time, and I'm so glad that I invited *poor* children to my Sanksgiving dinner." —*Mrs. M. F. Butts.*

A BOILING LAKE.

THERE is a lake of boiling water in the Island of Dominica, lying in the mountains behind Roseau, and in the valleys surrounding it are many solfataras, or volcanic sulphur vents. In fact, the boiling lake is little better than a crater filled with scalding water constantly fed by mountain streams, and through which the pent-up gases find vent and are rejected.

The temperature of the water on the margins of the lake range from 180 deg. to 190 deg. Fahrenheit. In the middle, exactly over the gas vents, it is believed to be about 300 deg. Where this active action takes place the water is said to rise two, three, or even four feet above the general surface level of the lake, the cone often dividing so that the orifices through which the gas escapes are legion in number. This violent disturbance over the gas jets causes a violent action over the whole surface of the lake, and though the cones appear to be special vents, the sulphurous vapors rise with equal density over its entire surface.

Contrary to what one would suppose, there seems to be in no case violent action of the escaping gases, such as explosions or detonations. The water is of a dark gray color, and, having been boiled over and over for thousands of years, has become thick and slimy with sulphur. As the inlets to the lake are rapidly closing, it is believed that it will soon assume the character of a geyser or sulphurous crater.

SPLINTERS.

SOME men buy umbrellas, some men achieve them, and some get wet and swear.—*Texas Siftings.*

MAMMA—(to little 5 year-old daughter)—"What is my little Nellie smiling about so prettily?" Little Nellie (with a wise look)—"I's jest finkin' of my foughts, mamma; zat is all."—*Epoch.*

MEDICAL Nomenclature.—Quizzle—"Why do you call your physician 'Pelican?' That's not his name, is it? Franklee—"Oh, no; merely a little pet name I have given him, on account of the size of his last bill.—*Pharm. Era.*

BUGGS (proprietor of cross-roads jewelry store) —Helio there! who's below? A voice below—A burglar; I am looking for your sterling silver. Buggs—Hold on; I'll be up in a minute and help you.—*Jewelers' Circular.*

"Now, Tommy," said that young man's mother, after a heated encounter in which he had come out second best, "say your prayers right away and get into bed." "I already said 'em, maw," answered Tommy, "as soon as I found out you meant to gimme me a lickin', but it didn't work."—*Terre Haute Express.*

JOHN WHITE'S THANKSGIVING.

"THANKSGIVING!—for what?"
—and he muttered a curse—
"For the plainest of food
and an empty purse;
For a life of hard work
and the shabbiest clothes?
But it's idle to talk
of a poor man's woes!
Let the rich give thanks,
it is they who can;
There is nothing in life
for a laboring man."
So said John White
to his good wife Jane,
And o'er her face
stole a look of pain.
"Nothing, dear John?"
and he thought again;
Then glanced more kindly
down on Jane.
"I was wrong," he said;
"I'd forgotten you.
And I've my health,
and the baby, too."
And the baby crowed—
'twas a bouncing boy—
And o'er Jane's face
came a look of joy;
And she kissed her John
as he went away;
And he said to himself,
as he worked that day:
"I was wrong, very wrong;
I'll not grumble again,
I should surely be thankful
for baby and Jane."

A Ride For A Life.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

WE had been so sure that the troubles that were overwhelming others in the manufacturing world would never touch us! We had been so sure that delegates from the unions might prowl about among our "hands," and never gain one single adherent.

I thought our safety founded on a rock. I thought we could calmly and sympathizingly look down upon the troubles of our neighbors.

Now, when I say "we," I mean John and I.

"This sounds strong-minded," you are ready to say.

Well, I don't know what other people may choose to call it, but in truth I have been very proud and glad that ever since the day I married the owner of Otway Mills he has asked me to take an interest in his work and in his people.

I don't mean to say that he talks to me about the price of yarns, or tells me of the rises and falls in the cotton market; though I think that if any great anxiety came upon him even of that kind, Jack would give me a hint of it, and I'm sure I would try my best to look as wise as a young owl, and as if the ins and outs of the trade were familiar subjects to my inquiring and enlightened mind.

You see I have had such an example in John's mother; and then—well, my family thought I ought to have done better than to marry a Lancashire mill-owner, and they said a good many bitter things. Aunt Denison used to give her shoulders the least little shrug, and throw her shawl about her as if she shivered slightly, when I alluded to my future home; and when she shook hands with John, she always managed to convey to me an affected misgiving that she rather feared her delicate fingers might be soiled by the contact. These things hurt at the time; though they lost their sting quickly enough when I got him all to myself, and he held me close in his arms and told me how hard he would strive to make me happy.

Happy! Well, well, I wonder does there live a happier woman than John's wife in all the length and breadth of England? Yet no life is without its days of trial, and the story I'm going to tell you now is of one of those dark times that comes to us all sooner or later.

The way that Aunt Denison and others of my own kith and kin behaved about my marriage, naturally put me somewhat "out in the cold" with them, and threw me more completely on John's people than might have been the case otherwise. And how good they were to me.

I had never seen Mrs. Ralph Otway, John's mother, until I came to the land of smoke and tall chimneys; for she had not come south to our wedding. Her delicate heath was the excuse put forward, but my own private opinion is, that John was afraid of auntie. He could put up calmly enough with that shiver and shrug when directed against himself; but both he and I had once inadvertently heard her say that "she believed all Lancashire ladies spoke in a loud voice, and had very red hands;" and I think that was enough for John.

When I first saw Mrs. Ralph Otway, this saying at first darted into my mind; for never among all the grand London ladies who visited at my guardian's house had I ever seen a woman so completely, beautifully refined in looks, voice and manner. Then her hands! Why, they were soft, womanly things, and closed over one's own with such a tender, faithful clasp, that once, sitting by her knee, I could not help bending down and kissing them as they lay upon her lap.

She used to tell me stories of Jack's boyish days, stories that she never tired of telling or I of listening to; and sometimes she spoke of her dead husband, and of how he had been revered and looked up to by everybody, until at last his name became a sort of proverb, and people in the business world had been heard to speak of him as "Honest Ralph Otway." You could hear a tremor in her voice when she spoke of things like these, and see a faint flush, like the pink in the inner side of the sea shell, rise to her delicate cheek.

"It is a great responsibility to have so many hands under one head, and to be answerable for the welfare of them all: it needs wisdom to rule them well, and to be just as well as kind," she would say to me, speaking of the great mills where the machinery shirred and buzzed all day long, and the "hands" came rushing out when the dinner-bell clanged the noisy summons, like bees swarming from their hive. Listening to her wise and tender words, it was borne in upon me that from his early boyhood John had been trained in the best school to make a man good and true.

He wants his mother to live with us—and you may be sure I had no will apart from his—but she said "no; married folks are best left to themselves." She had her way; but we would not let her go far from us; only a "step or two," as John said, so that we could run across of an evening, and she could come to us without fatigue.

By the end of the first year of my married life I seemed to have forgotton the fact of being a south-country woman. I found that there was plenty of art-lovers among the people whom Aunt Denison once told me went into society with little fluffy bits of cotton sticking to their dress-coats; while as for honest warmth of heart, and true, ungrudging hospitality, I soon came to the conclusion that the south couldn't hold a candle to the north.

I was very happy during that strange new year: happier still during the one that followed, when I held John's son in my arms, and saw the clear gray eyes that had won my girlish heart look up from my lap.

At first motherhood seemed to me such a sweet, new, precious joy, that I was ready to be over-anxious. I might have fallen into the mistake that so many young wives make, and in my love for baby let the even dearer possession of my husband's companionship slip from my hold. However dearly a man loves his children, he does not want to be always hearing about them; least of all when he comes home tired with the day's work; nor yet does he like to see his wife gradually become little better than a nursemaid. I know all these things now; but in those early days I might have lost the freshness of John's smypathy for me, and mine for him, if it had not been for the gentle word in season that fell from his mother's lips, and made, as it were, the scales to fall from my eyes.

She spoke with her hand on my shoulder, and her dear beautiful face all a-quiver in the dread lest I should be ready to resent her counsel.

"Don't let baby keep you from being the heart of John's life," she said. "Let none ever have the power of taking that from you."

Then I remembered how the night before I had been chattering about baby's remarkable feats and marvelous doings, and how weary John had looked—nay, how I had caught him in the loving hiding away of a yawn that would not be wholly repressed; and the wisdom came to me as I pondered afterwards.

Times were bad; trouble was around us everywhere in the mercantile world; evil counsel was leading honest men astray, and wanton hands were sowing the seeds of dissatisfaction, in the hope of reaping advantage to themselves. First one class of operatives went on strike, and then another. The "hands" at this mill or that refused to go on working except under the spur of higher wages, and so the busy whirr-whirr of the machinery was silent until stranger hands could be found to set it going again.

Darker shadows crept into the picture after this; men, an hour ago hale and hearty, were maimed, blinded, beaten almost out of life; and these crimes were done in the dark. The masters did not escape; one was fired at—the cowardly bullet coming from no one knew whither. I grew fearful; and in spite of struggles after courage more than once I had to turn away my head after John's good-by kiss had pressed my lips, as he set off for Otway Mills.

Our "hands" seemed all right as yet.

Yet I saw day by day how the cloud deepened on my husband's face. I used to sit very quiet just within reach of his hand, of an evening, or we would stroll down to Mrs. Otway's—John very silent, but yet I knew by the magnetism of touch, happy in the feeling of my hand resting on his arm. The mother and son spoke earnestly together of the state of trade, and the dark mists hanging over the north country, and well typified by the black smoke that came from the big chimneys, and hung like a canopy over the town.

Who shall tell of the tribute paid in pain and tears by the women and children in those troublous days? Surely no bitterer pang there can be than the sharp stab that goes through a mother's heart as the cry of her child for "bread! bread!" has to be smothered against her breast, lest its sound drive the brooding man by the fireless hearth to madness and violence.

This is what being "on strike" means to the wives and little ones of our mill hands. I say "our" because—alas! that I should have to write it—the day came when John returned from town looking as I had never seen him—as the mother who bore him had never seen him.

Otway Mills were stopped. The men whose relations with their masters had been a proverb in the trade were on strike.

John did not say much, he was never a man of many words, and silence is natural to men as a refuge from possible tears.

"Our turn has come at last; it is hardly the men's fault; this sort of thing is as catching as the plague. They know they have been fairly dealt with. That blackguard, Jim Stevens, is at the bottom of it; he was seen talking to one of the delegates from the union."

That was all John said. His mother and I listened; and noting the set line of his lips, and the stern look in his eyes, we knew that let the men of Otway Mills be as stubborn as they might, the master would not yield an inch.

Our home, the dearest spot on earth to me—the fairest, too, in spite of its nearness to a manufacturing center—was some three miles out of town.

John used generally to drive in and out, to and from the mills: but sometimes he rode his big black horse, King Cole, and now and again I would ride by him on my pretty bay mare, Lassie, returning with the groom.

Well, the night after he told me of the strike, I lay wide-eyed through all of the long hours, hearing each one strike below stairs, and thinking those thoughts of mingled love and fear that gather about a woman's heart like a flock of ill-omened birds when her nearest and dearest are threatened with danger. The stillness of night is a terrible magnifying medium: possibilities take gigantic proportions seen through its voiceless quiet. How glad I was when faint lines of light began to creep into the room.

It was past—that night of thoughts that were almost prayers—and prayers that were only like thoughts I trusted God to read the meaning of.

Breakfast over, the passionate protest in my heart bubbled up to my lips, like a spring that cannot well up to the light:

"Jack! O Jack! you will not go to the mills to-day!"

The answer came calm and clear, smiting me with bitter despair.

"I did not think my wife would try to make a coward of me."

He did not speak harshly. I could have borne it better if he had.

He kissed me a moment after—held me very fast and close—then, before he went, he kissed me again.

"That is for the youngster up-stairs," he said with a tender smile softening the set look of his mouth; "give it him when he wakes."

The groom, an old and faithful servant of the Otways, looked grave as he led up King Cole, and gave the bridle into his master's hand. Then John rode away, and I went into the house, seeing nothing clearly for the mist that gathered

around me, not even baby's face as nurse met me with him at the foot of the stairs.

That night and morning formed the initial letter of a time of anxious foreboding that seemed long to me, though in reality its duration was scarcely a fortnight.

Threatening letters—missives of that most cowardly character called anonymous—came at intervals. Many husbands would have hidden such things from a wife, but I think John knew that of all trials I could have least endured the thought that he kept a trouble from me.

Mrs. Otway's face grew pallid with a more transparent whiteness every day; and her eyes, always tearless, had a fixed, hard look that comes from grief restrained from outward show by might of will.

At length negotations for the employment of alien "hands"—men willing to work for the wages that was all the masters could give in those biting times—were spoken of. Wrath that had simmered now seethed; scowling men gathered in groups about the narrow streets that surrounded the mills like a labyrinth; muttered curses made starved and frightened women hurry by; clenched fists threatened the world for grievances brought about by the bad counsel of wicked men, and the mute resolve and stubbornness of uncultured natures.

Many cases of low fever, the result of insufficient food and fuel, occurred among the wives and children of our rebellious operatives; and my time was soon taken up by ministering to the necessities of the sick. In this work John never strove to hinder me; not yet, in the want-stricken homes of the people, was one word of reference to the strike ever uttered in my hearing. The people were kindly and grateful to me in their own rough way, and I crossed no threshold that a welcome did not greet me.

God knows how full my heart was in those days of darkness! He was teaching me the deepest lessons of my life, for, "in the day of my sorrow, I had sought the Lord." Not with long prayers, or among outward acts of devotion; but with a close dependence on His care, that became as the very air I breathed. Nor was I without comfort. The sympathy of those dependent upon us is a beautiful thing in time of trouble—and there was not a servant in our household whose heart did not beat in sympathy with mine; not one who did not rejoice with me in the safe return of the master evening by evening, and enter into my repressed anxiety as we saw him ride away in the morning.

At length came a day—one of those days that are to be found in most lives—a day, that however far away from the scenes our after fate may drift us, is traced upon our memories in audible colors, and forms a picture upon which we turn and look back, to marvel again how we lived through its terror and anguish.

CHAPTER II.

THE days were beginning to shorten. I love the gloaming, and was not sorry to welcome the soft dusk a wee bit earlier each day. Baby liked it, too, I think; for twilight makes idle fingers, and I had more time to toss him up and down, and listen to the merry music of his crows and pleasure. However sad and anxious at other times, I always managed to cheer up when baby made his appearance in my sitting-room; and, oh, what comfort I found in the touch of his pink-palmed hands clinging round my finger.

Well, one day, or rather one afternoon, as the shadows were lengthening out, and robin was piping the first notes of his plaintive evensong, I sat alone in my cozy morning-room.

My mother (I call her thus because in my creed John's belongings were mine too) had been ailing for a day or two. The strain of anxious, loving thought for her son had told upon that fragile frame, wearing it as the sharp sword wears the scabbard.

For our troubles were black around us as ever.

"If I had dealt unfairly by a single man in my employ, I would own to the wrong and make reparation," my darling said. "Some 'hands' have just cause to complain of their masters; mine have none. I will not budge one inch."

It seems to me that I am telling my story in a strange, desultory fashion, but I cannot help it. I give you the memories of those days as they rise one by one before me.

The illness of Mrs. Otway kept her a prisoner at her own home, and day by day I went to sit at her couch, and talk of John, and of scarce aught else. Women who are kind and true can give sweet store of comfort to each other in time of trouble by community of sympathy, even if they be but close friends; how much more then could we two, to each of whom the man upon whose head sorrow had fallen was the best and dearest!

Baby, on the day on which I now write, and from which I seem ever wandering in devious pathways of thought, had seen fit to take his sleep at an unwonted hour; so I was alone in the deepening twilight for once.

The house was very still just then, for the servants were at their tea, and a thick green-baized door shut off their premises from the rest of the rooms. It was so quiet that through the open window I could hear Lassie whining softly in her stable across the yard; so quiet that the sound of my name spoken hurriedly and almost in a whisper, made me start, and seemed, as it were, to tear the mantle of silence that was brooding over the early autumn evening.

"Mistress Otway! Mistress Otway!" said the voice; "for God's sake come around to the door, and let me in. I'm nigh dropping."

In a moment I had reached the porch, opened the door, and was half-supporting, half-leading a figure so ghostly, so death-like that it might almost have been taken for a visitant from the spirit-world.

It was Jim Steven's wife; a woman haggard and fever-wasted, and whom I had seen only the day before lying weak and wan with her two-days'-old baby by her side.

"Lizzie!" I cried as she staggered into my room, and still holding my arm in a wild, convulsive grasp, gasped out something I could not understand, "are you mad?"

"Ay, a'most," she whispered, raising her fever-bright eyes to mine, and wiping the sweat from her poor, thin face with a corner of her shawl. "Listen, lady!" she went on. "If they miss me fro' my bed and Jim learns as I've coom oop here, I'm a dead woman; he'll break every bone in my body as sure as theer's a God above; but I dunnot care. You've been a good friend to me, and the like o' me, and I won't see yo' a widder, and yer little one fatherless."

The words struck me like blows, felling me where I stood in their terrible force.

On my knees, with my head in this poor creature's lap, I wrestled with a pang so awful that as I write about it now, after long years, it seems to rise to my heart again.

"Nay," said Lizzie, lifting my bowed head with her poor, shaking hands; "yo' munna greet—yo' mun be strong and hale—for the sake o' him as loves yo'. If summat ain't done he'll be carried whoam to yo' dead this neet, wi' a bullet i' his bress'."

"My God! My God!" I cried, staggering to my feet; "help me!"

"Ay, I say Amen to that, lady," said Lizzie, catching my hand and pressing it against her bosom. "You've helpt others: happen God 'ull mind that now, and help yo'."

"What can I do? Tell me—tell me the whole truth, Lizzie. See, I'm strong and hale now; God has helped me already. He has put courage into my breast."

"Thou'll need it, my lass," said Lizzie, forgetting in her eager trouble all barriers of class; for pain, the great leveler, set us for the time side by side, just two sorrowing, timorous women, and nothing more.

"It's Jim as is at t' bottom of it all—may God forgive me for speakin' agen my mon, Mistress Otway—I wudna, but it's to hinder murder bein' done, and afore I tell thee, wilt swear that ne'er a word shall pass thy lips to hurt him? He's a bad mon, I know; but for a' that he's my mon—and it's hard for any woman to speak up agen her mon!"

In sorest anguish of impatience I wrung my hands the one in the other, and with lips as white as Lizzie's own, swore the oath she craved for.

Then she told me all the shameful story.

The foreign workmen whom (so report had it) John had decided to employ were on their way from the north; there was no chance now of bringing the owner of Otway Mills on his knees. The furnace of hate, heated seven times by the fuel of drink, seethed like a mighty caldron. Jim stirred it with angry bitter words. He had been at fault more than once, and at last was dismissed; he had wrongs to revenge, he said—they all had.

Thus the evil tongue tried to stir up the strife; but only one or two turbulent spirits like himself would be led into plotting against the master. These, then, had laid a foul plot—the plot that poor, faithful Lizzie had left her bed of weakness and pain to warn me of.

"You know," she said, "the big wood weer t' two roaads meet, half way 'twixct here an' t' mills? Weel, they're to watch for him passing by theer on his black horse, and O my lady! the shot 'ull come from behind the trees."

"When—when!" I almost shrieked.

"Toneet," she whispered hoarsely, as though she feared the very walls would tell Jim of her treachery. "Thar's no toime to lose. Thee must go theesel'; they'll know summut's up if ony other body goes by. Which o' the roaads does the meester coom by?" she added, with a sudden look of dread in her eyes that was mirrored in my own.

"Sometimes one, sometimes the other," I wailed. "Oh! I cannot tell which!"

"It's hard on thee," she said, with wonderful, pitiful lovingness. "How wilt thou knaw which way to gang?"

"How, indeed?"

"One—two—three—four," rang out the little clock upon the bracket by the window. We both started, and Lizzie gathered her shawl about her.

"I must gang my way," she said, her head dropping on her breast.

But she lingered a moment more, holding my hand close, and peering eagerly into my face.

"If Jim catches me," she said, "if he murders me, if I see thy face no more, dinna forget my little 'un, for Heaven's love!"

"No, no," I cried; "but do not speak such words! they break my heart! God keep you from harm. He will! He will!"

She shook her head, and a tear trickled down her cheek. "Tell thy errand to none," she said earnestly. "The men love the sight of thy bonny face, even the roughest of 'em; but they're not theirsel's now; they're loike wild beasts mad wi' the taste o' blood; they'd shoot yo' down loike a rat if they guessed yer errand."

I had hurriedly fetched a glass of wine, and now held it to her drawn lips.

"Drink's a good servant, but a bad master," she said when she had swallowed it, "and happen I'll get whoam the better for that. Good-by, my lady."

I have been, always been impulsive—at least I believe so. At all events, in another moment my lips were pressed against Lizzie's sunken cheek, and her tears and mine mingled. We stood thus, hand in hand, no longer divided by any thought of class or caste, only two sobbing, troubled women, and then—

Like a shade that had come and gone, as a strange apparition might do, the tall figure, with the shabby shawl gathered swad-like over the head, had glided on among the trees, and I was left alone to think.

Time—precious time—was passing by. I had—how long to reach the mills? Scarce an hour.

How should I go? By which of the two roads would John come? I stood out on the green, velvety lawn where of an evening he smoked his segar while I sat by. I remembered this as I stood there, and had to crush back the cry that rose to my lips.

Just at that moment, once more a low, soft whinny came from Lassie's stable. Then I knew.

The groom was crossing the yard; and speaking measuredly in no great haste, I told him to saddle the little mare.

"I am going to ride to meet your master; you need not come with me."

Then I turned hastily towards the house, fearing some expression of surprise upon the man's part.

I remembered that Lizzie had said, "let no one know thy errand."

To fly rather than walk to my bedroom, to equip myself in my riding-dress, in so short a time that it was a wonder mortal fingers could achieve the task, and then just for one moment to steal to my darling's little bed; not to weep, tears weaken at such a time, but just to kiss the cheek flushed in sleep, and lying in such sweet repose, upon the tiny, open palm.

"O baby!" I said, bowing my head upon my hands as I knelt; "I am going to save him—for you and for me!" And I sobbed, though my eyes were dry.

Who, watching a sleeping infant, has not seen that sudden ineffable smile that, like a sunbeam playing on the petals of a flower, parts the sweet milk-bedewed lips, and passes swiftly as it came?

I chose to take that smile as a good omen; I chose to think Heaven's angels in my hour of need stood by me, and the closed violets of my darling's eyes saw the ministering presence.

I heard the clatter of Lassie's hoofs upon the stones in the yard. I staid one fleeting instant

at the nursery-door, and then down the stairs, out through the pretty porch, one spring into the saddle.

Oh, it did not take long, and we were on our way—on our journey that meant life or death for him and for me—worse than death if the worst befell.

I dare not hurry much at first; I knew that the hedges had eyes, and the trees ears. How they sighed above my head as the evening wind swayed them gently.

I clutched my hand on the handle of my riding whip. I set my teeth hard. I fought for patience.

Every moment was a "jewel of great price," and yet I dare not hurry. Not yet. Once the terrible gloom of the thick wood past, and then the terrible choice of the two roads would be before me.

My heart beat so thick and fast I scarce could draw my breath; and just as we were near the thickest part of the bush and trees something stirred, while Lassie gave a sudden start and then a bound.

"Steady, steady, little one," I said, speaking out loud, "it is but a poor, silly sheep that has strayed into the wood."

Lassie trembled, as I could feel, but she stepped on quietly enough, and—Heaven knows where a woman's strength comes from at such times—I let the reins drop loosely on his shining neck, and sang to myself as I went along.

The ears that listened could not think a woman rode a race of life and death for the sake of the man she loved, could they?

We had reached the fork of the two roads, the dark shadow of the wood lay behind us. A touch and the mare stood still.

"Which? which? O my God! help me! guide me!" I prayed.

Then I let the reins fall an Lassie's neck, closed my eyes, and gently urged her on. She took the way that lay to the left. The choice was made.

Maddening thoughts throbbed in my brain. Was John even now, as Lassie's hoofs rang out on the hard road, coming along the almost parallel route, each step of his trusty steed leading him nearer to death? or had some blessed chance delayed him? Should I find him at the mill? Would Heaven be so merciful to me?

Three miles! three miles! Did ever the road, gleaming palely white before me in the gathering dusk, seem so long before! The night, like a soft curtain, was falling upon the world. I saw a single star glimmering above, the robin sang no more.

We were in the open country; we passed no more dwellings where lights twinkled through the trees, and seemed to speak of human companionship and happy homes. Alone in the twilight two solitary figures—my mare and I.

"On, Lassie, on!" I cried to her. "Faster, faster!"

I saw the smoky canopy that overhung the town, though now—ominous sign!—it was less dense than its wont. I could have cried aloud for joy.

"Lassie! Lassie! make good speed, little mare! we have not an instant to spare."

The road seemed to rush along beneath us.

"Quicker, quicker! make good speed! make good speed, little mare!"

I touched her flanks lightly with my whip; she tossed her pretty head, flung off the white foam that had gathered in her bridle, and sprang forward with added life and spirit.

"Lassie! dear Lassie! bonnie Lassie! see the tall chimneys are in sight; we are getting nearer him now, Lassie; we shall save him yet."

I knew not what words I had uttered in my mad excitement; hitherto I had managed to keep the curb upon my pain; but now, as the goal of my desires was nearly reached, I could have tossed my arms aloft; I could have shrieked out to the night; I could have been guilty of any mad thing.

At the entrance to the town I drew rein, and Lassie and I tried to look as quiet and respectable as we could. As we passed through the narrow streets, where men stood in little groups, and women, with poor, half starved looking children clinging to their petticoats, stared at me and my panting steed. The great gates that led into the mill-yard were closed.

How strange a contrast to when they stood widely opened, and a swarm of men, like bees out of a hive, came pouring through them, while the great bell, that meant "Work is over," clanged out its welcome message.

A man looked through the gateway, and not without some curt expression of amaze.

"Has the master gone?" I asked, in a voice that did not sound like mine.

"Noa, my leddy," he answered in the hard north-country tongue.

Once inside of the yard I stepped from the saddle, and left Lassie standing there panting and foam-flecked. Gathering my habit in my hand I went up the steps into the cold, white-washed passages, and so on to the room I knew well, John's room.

He was writing at a table, and the flaring gas above his head showed me his face, grave and anxious, change to a look of surprise when he saw his wife standing in the door-way.

Perhaps the moment of relief is more trying than the suffering we have waded through to reach it—I cannot tell; but I know as I met my husband's eyes, as I saw John there before me, as I realized the mighty truth that he was saved, I gave a great cry and fell down without sense or life at his feet.

These things happened a long time ago. People have almost forgotton the year of the great strikes. I have not.

Baby is a young giant now, a head taller than his mother, and owns a sister whose inches reach well-nigh to his stalwart shoulder. John still smokes upon the lawn upon a summer's evening, while I sit by; but I tell him he is growing fat and lazy. At which he laughs, and says he shall soon throw over Otway Mills to his son altogether.

Our mother rests now from all earthly sorrow, and her memory is like a beautiful presence among us.

On the table in my own sitting room is a little hoof, shod in a silver shoe. The relic is kept under a glass shade, and I always dust it with my own hands. I am sure you will know without my telling you that it is held dear for the sake of Lassie, the little mare. You will divine that it was one of those willing feet that carried me to Otway Mills, through the dusk of a memorable day, to save a life dearer than my own.

That dear life cost another, for poor Lizzie left her baby motherless, and I had to fulfill my promise. Weakened with fever, and her recent trial, the strain of that errand of love that she set out upon, to warn me of her husband's plot against mine, proved too much for her feeble frame.

I kept my oath sacredly, and no one save John and I knew that Jim's wife, with a noble disloyalty, spoke up "agen her mon."

FACTS ABOUT FLIES.

THE popular notion that house flies walk on the ceiling by the help of the suckers on their feet is a mistaken one. Notwithstanding the testimony on this point of many old and respected authors, the fact is that the fly has no suckers on its feet at all, but each of those six members end in a pair of little cushions and a pair of hooks. The cushions are covered with ever so many knobbed hairs, which are kept moist by an exuding fluid. Thus a fly is able to walk on a smooth wall or ceiling or window pane, and apparently defy the law of gravitation by the adherent power of the moist, hairy pads. You will understand the theory of it if you will touch the moistened end of your forefinger to the window glass or any smooth surface and observe the perceptible adhesion. For walking on rough surfaces the fly's foot cushions are of no use, but the insects are provided with the twelve strong hooks mentioned to do its rough travel with, clinging by them to any such surface as a white-washed wall or cloth.

Another prevalent fallacy is that the smaller flies seen in houses are young ones. As is the case with all insects, the fly's growth is accomplished in the larva state; it ends with the issuing from the pupa and expansion of the wings. Individual flies differ in size or maturity, just as is the case with man and other animals. Every house fly that you see was once a crawling maggot. The eggs laid by the female fly are usually deposited in warm manure or in decomposing vegetation. Each stable in summer that is not kept remarkably clean is a hatching and propagating place for flies. Within twenty-four hours after the eggs are laid they are hatched out into footless maggots, which inhabit the filth they are born in for a week and then contract to little brown objects known as puparia. Within this hardened skin the maggot is transformed into the perfect fly, which crawls out of the puparium five days later, already grown to full size, and wings its way to share your luncheon. A fly lives about three weeks. When the cold weather comes the flies nearly all die; but a few vigorous females remain torpid in nooks and crannies, thus surviving the winter and continuing their species.

S'POSIN'.

WHILE Judge Copley was sitting in his office the other day looking over some law papers, the door opened and a man hobbled in upon crutches. Proceeding to a chair, and making a cushion of some newspapers, he sat down very gingerly, placed a bandaged leg upon another chair, and said:

"Judge, my name is Briggs. I called in, judge, to get your opinion about a little point of law. Mr. Judge, s'posin' you lived up the 'pike here a half mile, next door to a man named Johnson. And s'posin' you and Johnson was to get into an argument about the human intellect, and you was to say to Johnson that a splendid illustration of the superiority of the human intellect was to be found in the human eye to restrain the ferocity of a wild animal. And s'posin' Johnson was to remark that that was all bosh, because nobody *could* hold a wild animal with the human eye; and you should declare that you could hold the savagest beast that was ever born if you could once fix your gaze on him.

"Well, then, s'posin' Johnson was to say he'd bet a hundred dollars he could bring a tame animal that you couldn't hold with your eye, and you was to take him up in it, and Johnson was to ask you to come down to his place to settle the bet. You'd go, we'll say, and Johnson'd wander round to the back of the house, and pretty soon come front again with a dog bigger'n any four decent dogs ought to be. And s'posin' Johnson'd let go of that dog and sick him on you, and he come at you like a sixteen inch shell out of a howitzer, and you'd get skeery about it, and try to hold the dog with your eye and couldn't. And s'posin' you'd suddenly conclude that may be your kind of an eye wasn't calculated to hold that kind of a dog, and you'd conclude to break for a plum tree, in order to have a chance to collect your thoughts, and to try to reflect what sort of another eye would be best calculated to mollify that sort of a dog. You ketch my idea, of course?

"Very well, then; s'posin' you'd take your eye off that dog; Johnson, mind you, all the time sicking him on and laughing, and you'd turn and leg it for the tree, and begin to swarm up as fast as you could. Well, sir, s'posin' just as you got three feet from the ground, Johnson's dog would grab you by the leg and hold on like a vise, shaking you until you nearly lost your hold. And s'posin' Johnson was to stand there and holler, 'Fix your eye on him, Briggs! Why don't you manifest the power of the human intellect?' and so on—gassing away with ironical remarks like those; and s'posin' he kept that dog on that leg until he made you swear to pay the bet, and then, at last, had to pry the dog off with a hot poker, bringing away at the same time a pound of your meat in the dog's mouth, so that you had to be carried home on a stretcher, and to hire four doctors to keep you from dying with the lockjaw.

"S'posin' this, what I want to know is, couldn't you sue Johnson for damages, and make him pay heavily for what that dog did? That's what I want to get at."

The Judge thought for a minute and then said:

"Well, Mr. Briggs, I don't think I could. If I agreed to let Johnson set the dog at me, I should be a party to the transaction and could not recover."

"Do you mean to say that the law won't make that infernal scoundrel, Johnson, suffer for letting his dog eat me up?"

"I think not, if you state the case properly."

"It won't, hey?" exclaimed Mr. Briggs, hysterically. "Oh, very well! very well! It's a beautiful government, this is. Beautiful, ain't it? I s'pose if that dog had chewed me all up and spit me out it 'd 've been all the same to this constitutional republic. But blame me if I don't have satisfaction. I'll kill Johnson, poison his dog, and emigrate to some country where the rights of citizens are protected. If I don't, you may bu'st me open!"

Then Mr. Briggs got on his crutches and hobbled out. He is still a citizen and will vote at the next election.—*Max Adeler.*

AFTER the wedding—He—"What are you crying for, love?" She—"Over papa's wedding present—boo-hoo." He—"Why, what's the matter with it?" She—"It's nothing but the receipted bill for the gas we used up during our courtship."—*Burlington Free Press.*

The Crossing Sweeper.

BY GEORGE R. SIMS.

SHE was an odd-looking little old woman, and she was busily engaged in sweeping the crossing at the top of my street when I first saw her.

My attention was attracted to her by the fact of her being where she was. I had lived in Gower Street for three years, I had crossed at that particular crossing almost every day during my residence in that gloomy thoroughfare, and I had naturally come to know the regular crossing sweeper. The regular crossing sweeper was an old man; why had he suddenly resigned his position to the old woman?

I had read some wonderful stories about crossing sweepers, who make fortunes and retire from business, about crossing sweepers who sell "the good will" of their crossing for a good round sum, and about crossing sweepers who leave their crossing to their relatives, just as other citizens leave their estates to theirs. Having these things in my mind, and being addicted to "making notes," I at once gave vent to my natural curiosity and asked the new crossing sweeper a few questions.

"Where's old Tom?" I said, "how is it he's not here?"

"We've changed crossings," she said, quickly, and went on with her sweeping.

Now I am not a great judge of crossing sweeping, but I have watched the members of the profession at work long enough to know how they go about it, and I instantly came to the conclusion that the old lady was not a very old hand at the business.

She didn't go about the work in the regular way, and although while I stood watching her several people crossed the read, she didn't drop a curtsey or sweep imaginary mud aside in the regular professional manner.

Perhaps she was a little confused by the way in which I stared at her, and that accounted for her absent-mindedness, for presently when a young lady came across the road the old woman followed her up closely and whined out, "Spare a copper for the poor old crossing sweeper, lady. Please spare a copper." "I haven't one," said the young lady, and passed on. "How do you find business here?" I said, determined to get into conversation with the old lady who had thoroughly piqued my curiosity. "Better than at your old crossing, or not so good?"

"I can't say. I ain't been here long enough."

With that the old lady walked across to the other side of the road, and began sweeping as far away as possible.

"She isn't inclined to be friendly," I thought to myself. "Perhaps she thinks I'm a mendicity man, or something of that sort."

I had an important appointment in Oxford Street, and so I was unable on this occasion to devote any more time to the study of the new crossing sweeper. After I had walked some little distance along Bedford Square I turned round, and I saw that the old lady was looking after me. Directly she saw that I was watching her she resumed her work.

I was out of doors for the remainder of the day, and it was ten o'clock in the evening before I turned my steps homewards. In passing through Dyott Street, a narrow street in Bloomsbury, in which there still remained a few of the old common lodging-houses, I saw an old man staggering out of a public-house, evidently slightly the worse for liquor.

As I came up to him I recognized him at once. It was old Tom, our regular crossing sweeper.

"Why, Tom," I said, "what's the matter with you?"

"Beg your pardon, sir," he mumbled. "Hope you won't think I'm often like this, but—er—I've had a bit of luck and I've took more than's good for me."

"A bit of luck, eh? Sold your crossing to the old lady, eh?"

"Oh, you noticed her, did you? No, I ain't sold it to her. I have only sold her the broom; but I've let her have the crossing for a week, and she's guv' me two suverins for it—two whole suverins. Rum go, ain't it?"

"Very rum! So the old lady's hired the crossing for a week, eh? Did you know her at your other crossing?"

"Lor' bless you, sir, I never see her in my life before. She come to my place where I live, and she says: 'You're the man as sweeps at the top of Keppel Street, Grower Street, ain't, you?'

"'Yes, mum,' I sez, 'I am!' Then she outs with what she wants. She'd give me half-a-crown for my broom and two suverins if I'd let her have that crossin' for a week, and I took it.

"It's a rum go, ain't it, cus it ain't wuth it, and, between you and me, sir, I don't believe the old gal ever swept a crossin' afore in her life."

"It's a rum go, Tom, but I hope you won't spend all the money in the public-houses, or you'll have the worst of the bargain."

With which piece of good advice I left him and went home.

The next day the old lady was at her crossing again. She was there all the week. When I passed I had a good look at her, and in order to get a better chance I always stopped and felt in my pocket for a copper for some little time, before I drew it out and gave it her. She always thanked me civilly enough, but I felt quite sure she objected to my scrutiny. At the end of the week the old lady disappeared, and old Tom was back in his accustomed place.

From him I could gather nothing, except that the old lady had returned him his broom, and informed him that she thought she should go back to her own crossing again, "as it paid better."

I made an entry, "The Mysterious Crossing Sweeper," in the little note book which I always carry to jot down odd ideas and notions in, and then the matter passed out of my mind, until it was brought back again in a very curious way.

A few doors from me in Gower Street there lived a lady who, in defiance of the clauses of her lease, took in lodgers. It is a legend in Gower Street that the houses must not be let out in apartments. In order to keep up the respectability of the thoroughfare it is, or was, understood that the lease contained a stringent clause against sticking up bills in the windows or inserting advertisements in newspapers to the effect that lodgings are to let.

The clause, if it exists, is certainly set at defiance, for lodgings are as plentiful in Gower Street as blackberries in September.

Mrs. Smith, the lady who let the lodgings openly, and with cards and advertisements announced the fact, lived a few doors below me, and I had made her acquaintance through a professional friend of mine who lodged in her house, a young fellow playing at one of the London theatres, by name Richard Lampson, commonly called "Dick."

About a week after the old lady crossing-sweeper had resigned her broom in Gower Street I was passing Mrs. Smith's house, when Lampson, who had the dining-room floor, tapped at the window and beckoned me to come in.

"There's been a nice upset here last night," he said. "You know that pretty little woman I told you about, Mrs. Vere, who had the floor above me?"

"Yes; I saw her once at the window."

"Well, last night there was a quite a scene here. An old gentleman and an old lady drove up in a cab and asked to see Mrs. Vere. The landlady said she would see if Mrs. Vere was in, but the lady and gentleman followed her, and were in the room right on her heels. Directly Mrs. Vere caught sight of the old gentleman she gave a shriek, and then (the landlady told me all about it) there was a nice to do. The old gentleman, it seems, was Mrs. Vere's papa. The old lady was her mamma, and it was quite a dramatic scene, the end of it being that papa and mamma drove off with their daughter, who seemed much distressed, and was crying bitterly."

"But I thought you told me that Mrs. Vere was married, and that her husband lived here with her," I interrupted.

"Just so; that is the strangest part in the affair. When she was leaving, the landlady stood at the front door. As the cab had driven away she looked after it down the street, and she declares that she saw Mr. Vere, the husband, standing in the doorway of the opposite house, where he had evidently been watching the proceedings. Instead of coming over he walked away in the opposite direction, and he hasn't been here since.

"H'm. I suppose the truth is they were not married."

"No," replied Dick, "I don't think that's the solution of the mystery, for my landlady tells me that the old gentleman gave her a message. 'If my daughter's husband wants to know where she is,' he said, 'refer him to me.' With that he gave her his card, from which she learnt that he was Sir George Elliston, of Farnham Hall, Henley-on-Thames."

"Sir George Elliston—why that must be the banker. He's a very wealthy man."

"Yes, and its hardly likely that his daughter would occupy a drawing-room floor in Gower Street with a man who wasn't her husband."

"Hardly. It must have been a runaway match, and the man must be somebody the family strongly disapproved of. It must have been a mesalliance."

"I should think so, but after all if the young lady is Vere's wife, the father cannot take her away from him. At any rate, it would be a curious thing for him to stand opposite the house and see it done without interfering—a very curious thing—there must be something more in it than we can guess at."

While we were talking the landlady came into Dick's room.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Lampson," she said, "I didn't know you had any one with you."

"It's all right Mrs. Smith, we were only talking about Mrs. Vere. Have you found out anything fresh?"

"No, but I have just had a telegram from Sir George saying that Mrs. Vere's boxes will be called for to-day, and that I am to give them up. It's very odd, isn't it, we've packed everything, and I don't see that I can keep them, for the rent's paid."

"But what about the husband's property," I asked. "You can't give that up unless he comes for it himself, and I am not sure you are justified in giving anything up without his sanction."

"He hasn't left any property," replied the landlady, "and that's the oddest thing about the whole affair. He took his portmanteau and his things away yesterday morning, saying he was going away for a week—and yet I'll swear he was standing opposite this house last night. I shall give the young lady's things up to Sir George. I don't want to have any bother or legal proceedings, and I'm quite sure the husband won't interfere. If he'd been going to he'd have done it when his wife was taken away—he wouldn't have waited till her boxes went."

At that moment a cab drove up to the door and a young man got out and knocked. The servant went to the door, and presently came in to say that Sir George Elliston had sent his servant for Mrs. Vere's boxes and any property she'd left in the room.

The boxes and all the things that Mrs. Smith could find were duly brought down and loaded on the cab. Then the young man got in and was driven off.

I was standing with Lampson at his window, watching the proceedings, when all of a sudden I gave an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the matter?" asked Lampson.

"Do you see that old lady who's just come up the street in a hansom cab?"

"Well, what of her?"

"Oh, nothing; only I'll swear that she's the same old lady who a week ago was sweeping the crossing at Keppel Street. I've stared at her too often not to know her again now."

"Go on with you—a crossing sweeper in a hansom cab."

"You may laugh, but I'll wager every shilling I'm worth in the world that I'm right."

At that moment the four-wheel cab with Mrs. Vere's luggage on it turned the corner by Bedford Square, and round the same corner, close behind it, went the hansom cab in which sat the old lady crossing sweeper. What did it mean?

Two days afterwards I received a little further information from Dick about what he called "The Vere mystery." On the same afternoon that Mrs. Vere's luggage had been taken away, Sir George had called at the house himself.

He was thunderstruck when he was told that he had authorized its removal. He had never sent any telegram, he had never instructed any one to call.

"It's that scoundrel Vere," he exclaimed; "he was afraid to call himself, and he thought that perhaps after my daughter going away with me you would hesitate to give her things up to him, and so he concocted this little plot. There must be something in the boxes that he wanted, or he wouldn't have gone to the trouble. Well, let him have them, and I hope I shall never hear of the wretch again."

Mrs. Smith ventured to make a few inquiries, and Sir George instantly, to use a vulgar expression, "dried up." His indignation had led him into saying more than he intended. "My dear madam," he said, "my daughter has married a man who was unable to support her; he has deserted her—I have taken her home. Your rent is paid. That is all you want to know. Pray don't gossip about the matter if you can help it. Good afternoon."

It must have been quite twelve months after the disappearance of Mrs. Vere from Gower Street, that one afternoon I was sitting outside the Cafe de la Paix in Paris when I caught sight of my old friend Inspector Tozer, formerly of Scotland Yard and now of ——— Street, [illegible], Private Detective.

I called to him and he came and [illegible] bosom exchanged friendly greetings—I [illegible] her warmly sit down and have a cigar.

[illegible] she rose to [illegible] to prevent [illegible] me, [illegible] all my power [illegible]ice. But I do not yet know

[illegible]

"No thanks, old fellow," he replied, "I'm in a hurry."

"Got a job on here?"

"Yes—I am going up to the Bois—come with me."

"Certainly."

We hailed a fiacre and away we drove.

"What is it this time, Tozer?" I asked, for I am always keenly alive to the romance of a private inquiry.

"Can't tell you now, my boy. Ask me in six months' time."

I accepted the hint and talked about something else. We drove through the Arc de Triomphe, and although my companion did not appear to be taking any interest in the scene, I was quite sure he was looking for some one among the occupants of the carriages that drove past us. Suddenly I gripped the detective's arm.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Look yonder," I cried; "there—at that old lady in the landau."

"I don't think much of the old lady, but the horses are magnificent—they are superb."

"That old woman was a crossing sweeper when I first saw her," I exclaimed.

"Nonsense," he replied. "That old lady is Mrs. Cyrus Cox, of Chicago, widow of a cattle king, and worth Heaven knows how many million dollars. She lives in Paris now."

"And the handsome young man sitting in the carriage by her side—is he her son, then?"

"No, my dear fellow—he is her future husband." I was dumbfounded. I could have sworn the old lady was my crossing sweeper, but the landau, the magnificence, the millions—I must have been mistaken—yet I never saw such a resemblance in my life.

"It's a curious story, that old lady's," continued the detective. "She's marrying that young fellow through an advertisement."

"Indeed."

"Yes. It seems the old girl, tired of widowhood, went to a marriage agency in Paris and was advertised. You know the sort of thing: 'A widow of fortune is anxious to meet with a suitable partner; must be dark, handsome; money no object if of gentlemanly appearance and manner.'"

"And this young fellow answered the advertisement?"

"I suppose so. At any rate, that's what Paris gossip says. And I know they're to be married next week at the English Church."

"What's his name?"

"Vaughan—or something of that sort—I should think he was a penniless adventurer and I wish the old girl joy of him."

"Cocher! Hotel Continental!"

The coachman turned the horse's head towards Paris, and we drove back again. It struck me after he had set me down at the Grand that the detective's business in the Bois seemed to be finished as soon as he had seen Mrs. Cyrus Cox and her affianced husband.

Left to myself and to my own thoughts my mind reverted to the old lady crossing sweeper of Gower Street. Mrs. Cox had brought her back most vividly to my mind. Of course, Mrs. Cox, of Chicago, couldn't possibly have been a crossing sweeper, but it was a most extraordinary resemblance.

I stayed in Paris a fortnight, and only saw Inspector Tozer once more. At the end of the fortnight business called me back to London. I left by the morning train, and when I reached Calais they were selling the London papers of that day. I bought a *Daily Telegraph*, and after reading the leaders I turned to an inside page.

There a name at once attracted my attention. It was that of Mrs. Cyrus Cox. The paragraph which I read was to the effect that a Mrs. Cyrus Cox, supposed to be the widow of a wealthy American, had been the victim of a fashionable adventurer who had made her acquaintance through an advertisement. The widow had advertised for a husband, and had selected from the written offers received an English gentleman, who called himself Harry Vaughan. The courtship was short; the ceremony took place at the English Church, and the happy couple started to spend their honeymoon in England, by the bride's request. They were to go to Dover and then to proceed to Scotland. On the arrival at Dover the bride complained of being upset by the passage, and did not want to continue her journey for a day or two.

On the second day of their stay, a gentleman arrived at the hotel. He announced himself as a police officer and proceeded at once to arrest Vaughan as one Henry Vere on a charge of bigamy. In spite of his protest, the gentleman had to consider himself in custody, and was taken to London without being allowed to see Mrs. Cox. The accusation put forward was that John was already married.

He explain his situation to his bride. It is understood that a former marriage with a young lady, the daughter of an eminent and wealthy English banker, can be proved.

"Vere," I exclaimed as I dropped the paper. "Vere," why that's the name of the man who married Mr. George Elliston's daughter. They lived in Gower Street, and it was there I saw the crossing sweeper in a hansom cab following Mrs. Vere's luggage. I'll take my oath now that Mrs. Cyrus Cox was the crossing sweeper."

When the case came on I was away in the provinces, but I read the account. The first wife was present—she was a Miss Elliston—her marriage was proved. The second wife gave her name as Janet Cox, and described herself as a widow. She related the story of her advertisement and of the marriage, and she stated that her husband had signed all the papers and gone through the ceremony in the name of Henry Vere, explaining to her that Vere was his real name, but that for family reasons he called himself Vaughan.

The prisoner made no defence—there was none to make—and was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

Sometime afterwards the name of Vere cropped up again in the Divorce Court—Mrs. Vere sued for a divorce from her husband, Henry Vere, on the ground of bigamy, and the divorce was eventually granted.

But still the mystery of the crossing sweeper who became an American millionairess, or the American millionairess who became a crossing sweeper remained unexplained. I talked the whole affair over with Dick Lampson, and we summoned Mrs. Smith to our counsel, but we could make nothing of it. We all agreed that it was very curious that Mrs. Vere No. 1, or her friends, should have had such remarkably early information of the second marriage as to get the bridegroom arrested soon after the commencement of his bigamous career.

We wondered what had become of Mrs. Cyrus Cox. Had she returned to Paris to advertise again, or had she taken warning from the fate which had befallen her, and settled down in single blessedness for the remainder of her life—or (the suggestion was Dick's) had she developed her old eccentricity, and bought another broom and hired another crossing?

The whole thing might have remained a mystery to us forever, had I not one day wanted, for professional purposes, to visit the Black Museum at Scotland Yard. Thinking how I could best get an introduction to the officer in charge, which would secure me something more than the cursory glance to which the general public are treated, I remembered my old friend Tozer. I knew he would give me a letter which would secure me all I wanted, and so I went down to the office and sent up my card. I was admitted at once into his sanctum, and heartily welcomed. I explained my business, and Tozer gave me the letter. Then he began to talk about business, and he told me of some highly romantic cases in which he had lately been engaged. One in particular interested me very much. He had prevented a marriage between a young nobleman and a young lady in the chorus of a burlesque theater by means of a young lady detective on his staff. This young lady had actually secured an engagement at the theater, and dressed every night in the same room with the ambitious damsel, and became the bosom friend and repository of all her secrets; and had acquired information which, communicated to the friends of the young nobleman, had enabled them to nip the mesalliance in the bud.

"Very clever," said I. "But it seems rather mean, doesn't it, to do that sort of thing?"

"All's fair in love and the detective business," he replied. "I call it jolly clever. Would you like to see Miss Jones, the girl who did it? You'd never take her for a female detective."

"I should very much like to see her," I replied.

The great Tozer struck a bell, and a clerk answered it.

"Send Miss Jones to me."

Miss Jones, a remarkably elegant young woman of about twenty-five, entered, and I confess I should never have suspected her calling. We had a little conversation, in which she told us of some remarkable adventures she had had, and then, being called away on business, she left us.

"I have another lady here I should like you to see," said Tozer, as I rose to go. "She's the cleverest woman in England, bar none, and worth her weight in gold. You wouldn't believe what that woman's done. No man could have done it half so cleverly."

With that he rose, went into an inner office, and returned with a lady.

He introduced her.

"This is Mrs.——"

He didn't get any further.

"The crossing sweeper!" I exclaimed.

Yes. There, standing before me in Tozer's office, was a little old lady whom I at once recognized as the crossing sweeper of Gower Street, and as Mrs. Cyrus Cox, of the Bois de Boulogne.

The little old lady had recognized me too.

"You didn't believe I was a crossing sweeper!" she said. "Ah! you were a terrible nuisance. I was afraid you might know somebody where the Veres were lodging, and spoil all my plans."

"You were watching the Veres, then?"

"Yes," replied Tozer. "Mrs. Cox—that's her correct name, without the Cyrus, you know—was put on by me to find Miss Elliston, and to find out who the man was with whom she had eloped.

"She suspected Vere, who was an accomplished scoundrel, and had been mixed up in a good many queer transactions; and as she knew he would spot her if she walked about the street and watched in the usual way, and so she hit on the idea of sweeping the crossing. That enabled her to watch the house all day, and as soon as she had seen Miss Elliston at the window and Vere go into the house she was satisfied, and reported to me; and I communicated with Mr. Elliston, who had put the case in my hands.

"She watched the house the day after he took his daughter away, and when her luggage went she guessed what was up, and followed it to Vere's lodgings, where it was taken. He wanted the jewelry and the letters which were in the boxes, I expect. At any rate, that induced her to watch Vere until he left Paris; and then we telegraphed to have the train met by one of our men there, who kept him in view till we wanted him."

"And the marriage?"

"Well, that was a desperate scheme, but it was all Mrs. Cox's idea. Wonderful woman, you are, Cox, to be sure."

Mrs. Cox accepted the compliment with a little toss of her head.

"It wasn't very wonderful," she replied, "seeing that Mr. Elliston said he would give a thousand pounds to get his daughter freed from the man she was tied to for life, and who was a bad lot, as the girl herself discovered and admitted as soon as she came to her senses. He had simply made love to her and persuaded her to elope and marry him, in order to get money and blackmail the family. Fortunately, we gave Mr. Elliston some information which stopped that, and made my gentleman sing small. When I found that he was settled in Paris I ascertained that he was trying the same game on with the widow of a shopkeeper. Whether he would have married her I don't know, but I determined that he should marry me. I hired a carriage and pair, lived in grand style in a villa at Neuilly, just outside Paris, and gave out that I was a rich widow and looking out for a husband. I took care that he should hear of me and read the advertisement. The Marriage Bureau lady managed that, and presently, to my great delight, I found the fish was hooked."

"You know the rest," broke in Inspector Tozer. "The marriage was duly solemnized, and Mrs. Cox expressed her intention of settling a large sum of money on her husband. She persuaded him to come for the honeymoon to England, and at once wired me; and I communicated with the police, with the result which you know. Mrs. Cox got rid of her illegal husband, and Miss Elliston of her legal one. Mr. Elliston paid all the expenses, and has behaved very handsomely to Mrs. Cox and myself for severing his daughter from a tie which would have marred her whole life. Clever, wasn't it?"

"Very clever," I said. "But it was a plot. It was collusion."

"Oh, bosh!" exclaimed Tozer. "Nobody—not even Vere—knew anything about that, and it wasn't our business to enlighten him. Vere committed bigamy, and if a man or woman commits bigamy that entitles the wife or husband to a divorce, and that was all we wanted. Cox did it, and I don't care where the other comes from, she's the cleverest female detective in London."

I readily admitted that, and congratulated Mrs. Cox on her success; and then I bid Tozer good-day, and went back to tell Dick Lampson that I had fathomed the mystery of the old lady crossing sweeper at last.